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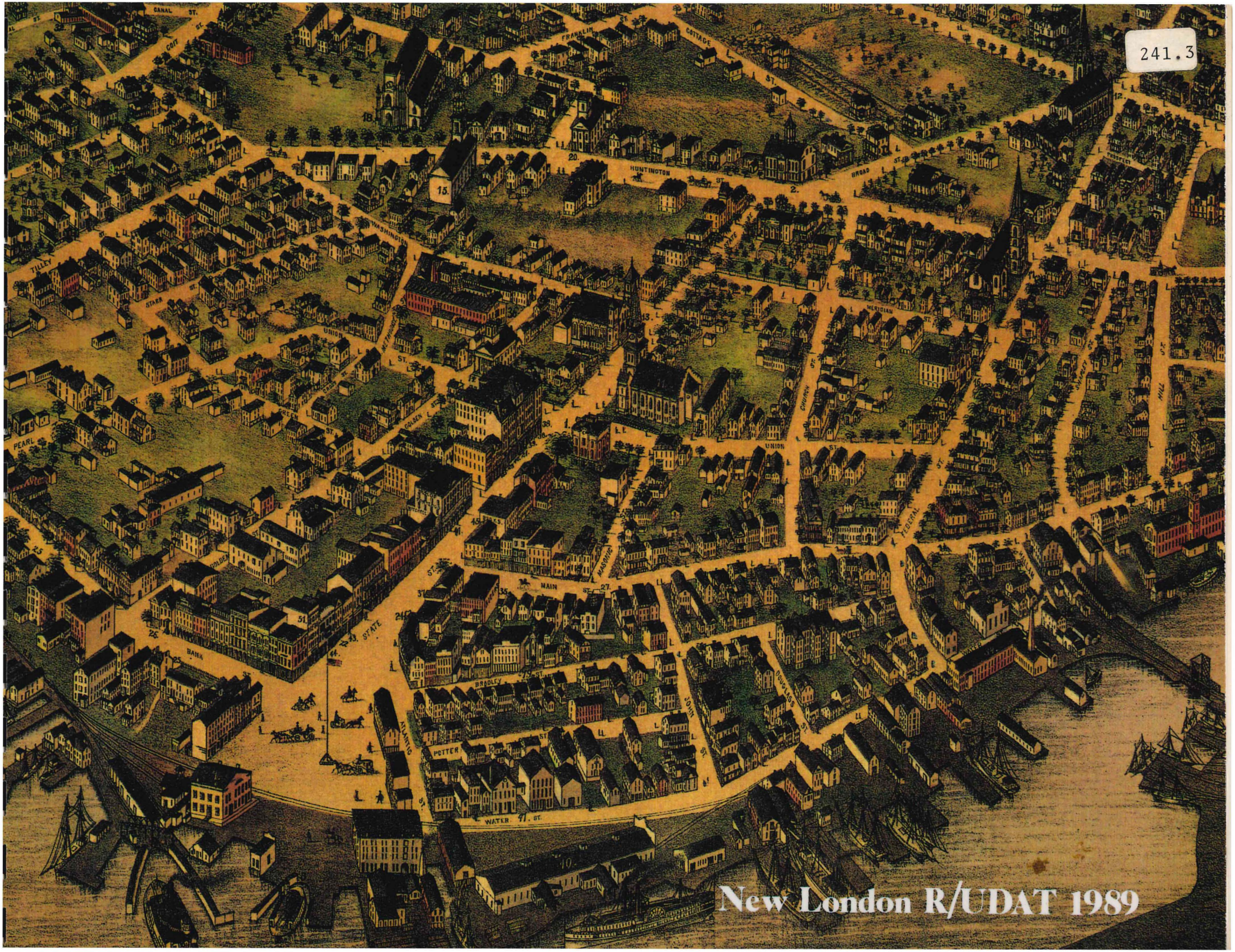

New London R/UDAT 1989

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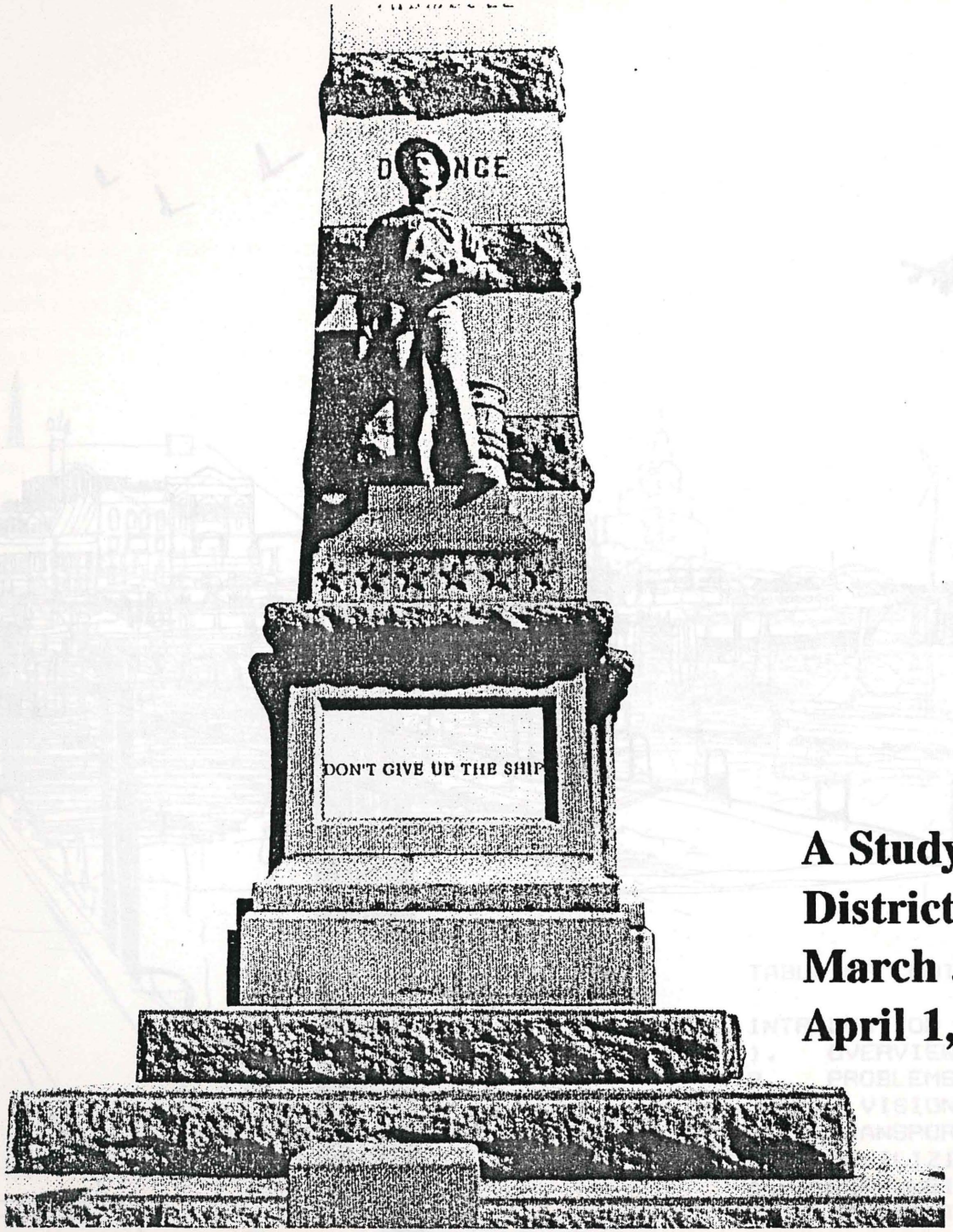
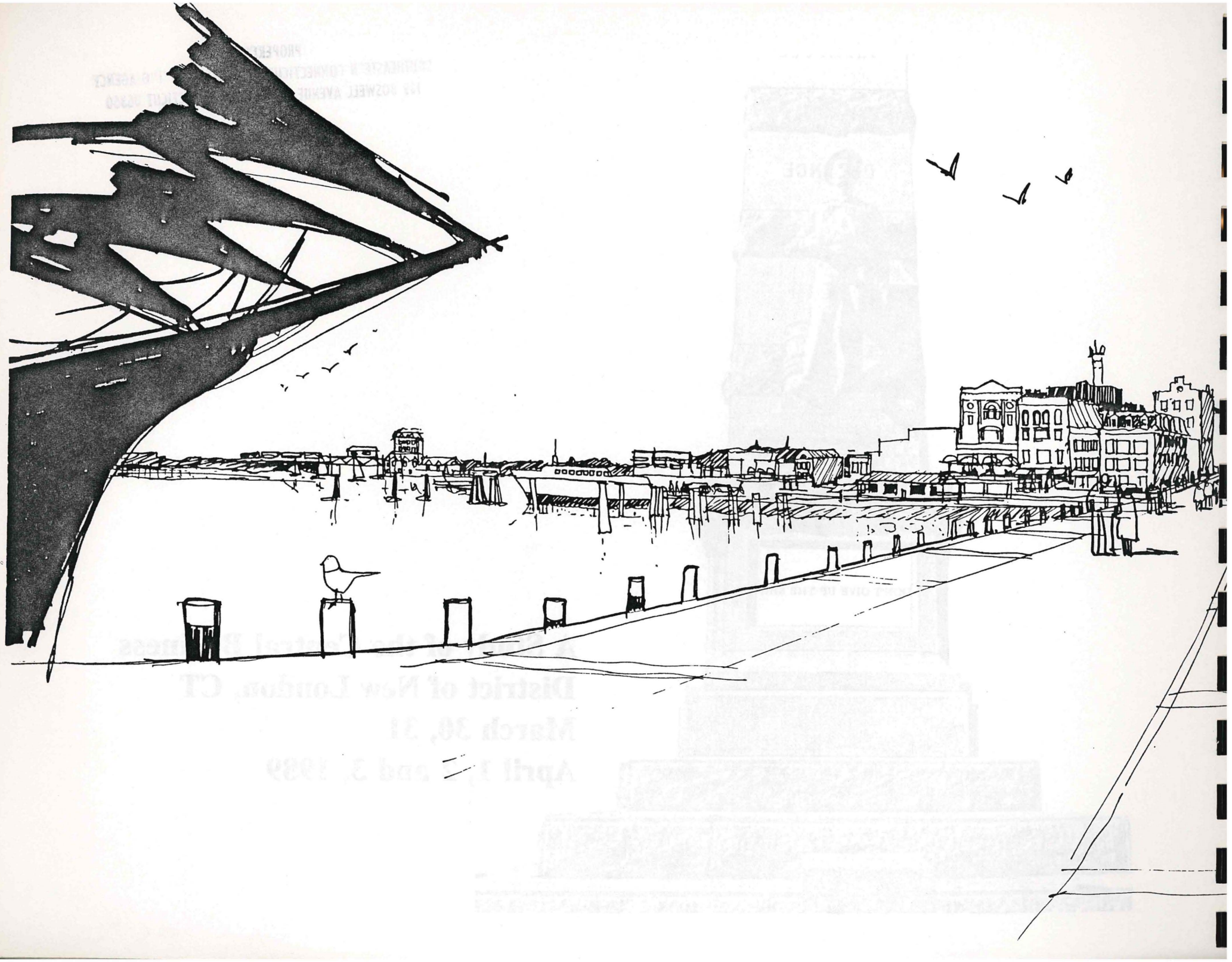
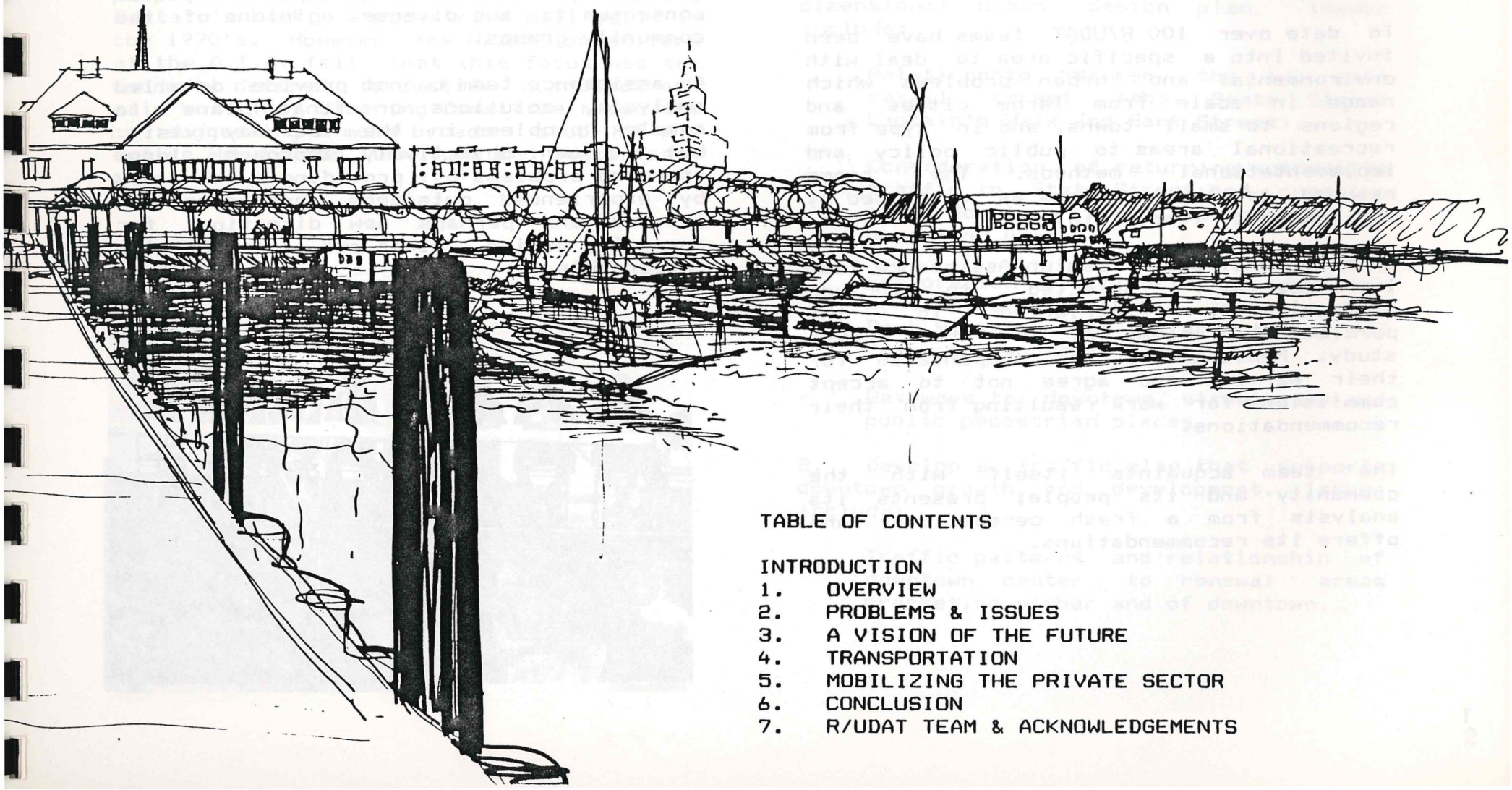


A Study of the Central Business District of New London, CT
March 30, 31
April 1, 2 and 3, 1989





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INTRODUCTION

THE R/UDAT PROGRAM

The Urban Planning and Design Committee of the American Institute of Architects has been sending Urban Design Assistance Teams to various American cities since 1967.

To date over 100 R/UDAT teams have been invited into a specific area to deal with environmental and urban problems which range in scale from large cities and regions to small towns, and in type from recreational areas to public policy and implementational methods. The teams respond to the problems as described by the community leadership.

Each Regional/Urban Design Assistance Team is specially selected to include professionals experienced in the particular problems of the area under study. Members are not compensated for their service and agree not to accept commissions for work resulting from their recommendations.

The team acquaints itself with the community and its people; presents its analysis from a fresh perspective; and offers its recommendations.

OBJECTIVES

The objectives of the R/UDAT Program are: to improve the physical design throughout the nation, to illustrate the importance of urban and regional planning, to stimulate public action, to give coherence, and to provide opportunity for consensus to the diverse opinions of the community groups.

An assistance team cannot provide detailed analysis, solutions or final plans to complex problems in the four-day visit, but it can objectively approach long-standing problems by: providing a new look by experienced outsiders, providing new impetus and perhaps new direction for community action, clear and comprehensive responsible.

THE VISIT

During the summer of 1988, New London formed a committee for the purpose of submitting a proposal to the A.I.A. The New London R/UDAT Steering Committee's proposal requested assistance in redoing Captain's Walk, a pedestrian mall built in the 1970's. However the R/UDAT organizers at the A.I.A. felt that this focus was too narrowly defined to justify a project and said so. The Steering Committee responded by suggesting a much broader study of the entire New London Downtown and Waterfront area.

Charles Zucker, Steve Joncus and Charles Redmon visited New London in mid-November for the purpose of evaluating the proposal and setting the focus of the R/UDAT study. Their conclusions are as follows:

1. Identify development objectives/three dimensional urban design plan. Issues include:

   Relationship between the two main retail street (the State Street Captain's Walk and Bank Street).

   Consideration of returning automobile traffic to State Street and creation of a downtown retail management and promotion plan.

   Exploration of riverfront development, its relationship to State and Bank Streets, the historic train and ferry transportation hub.

   Gateways to downtown, streetscape and public pedestrian places.

2. Develop a traffic plan that supports downtown growth and development. Issues include:

   Traffic patterns and relationship of downtown center to renewal areas bracketing either and of downtown.

Access to parking, pedestrian access to shops from parking, access to the waterfront, and public transportation.

3. Develop an integrated retail, economic development, and downtown management strategy. Issues include:

Economic growth and development working in support of city-wide goals.

A program to involve the citizens and community in the planning process.

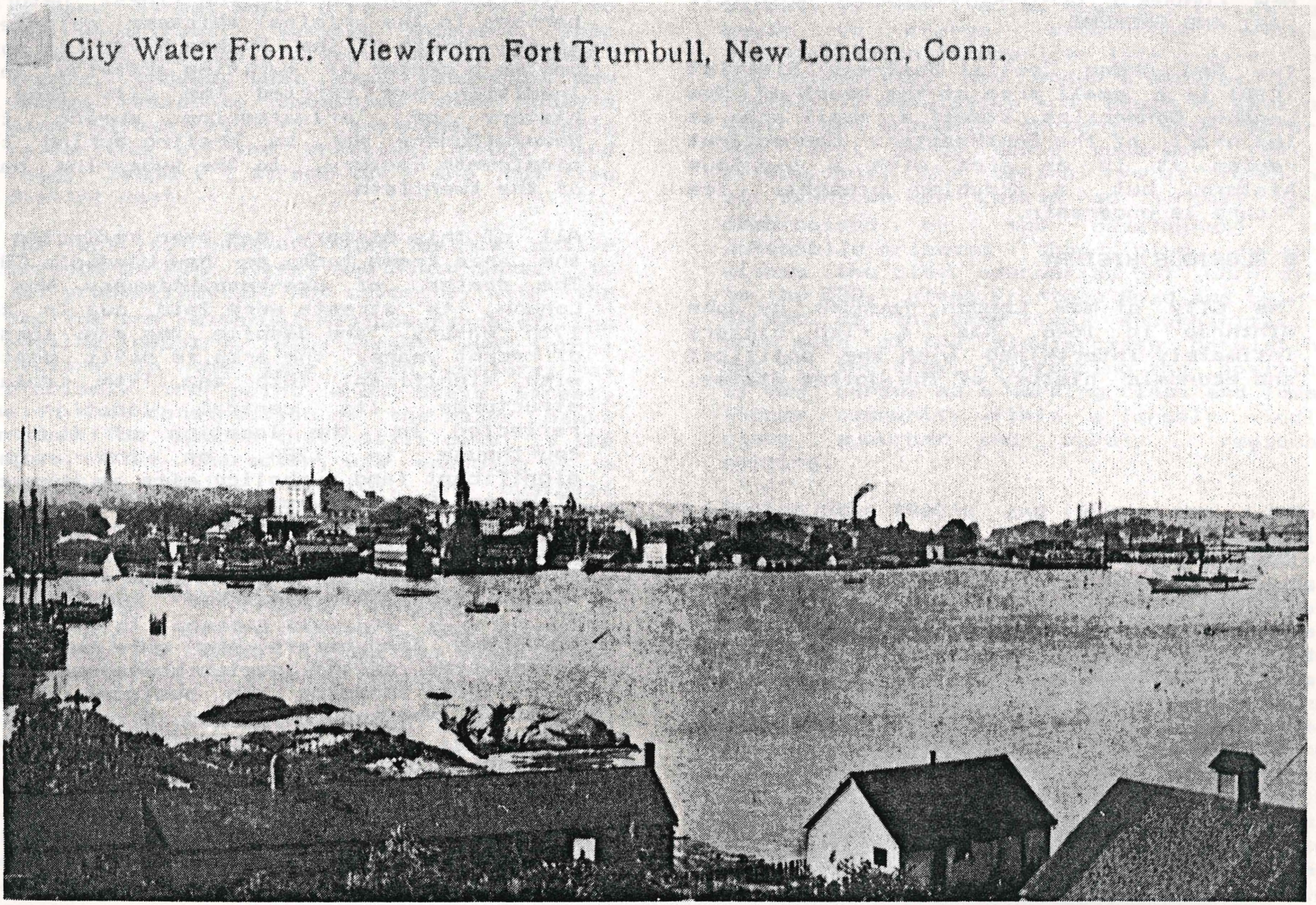
Coordinated downtown management and promotion strategy.

4. Assess current city planning practice and use of planning tools. Issues include:

Coordinated planning, urban design and economic development public policy.

Assessment of development tools, their coordination, and application in support of city-wide development goals.

Overview

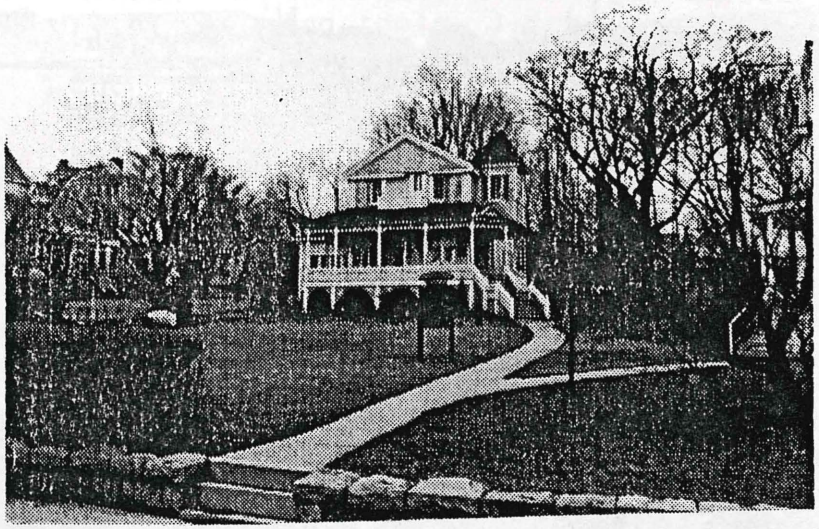


NEW LONDON'S CENTRAL BUSINESS DISTRICT: PAST AND PRESENT

The New London Central Business District (CBD) is a small area at the heart of New London, Connectict, itself a small area at the heart of the Southeastern Connecticut region. It is an area with a glorious history, but a troubled present. Its future is uncertain.

A GLORIOUS HISTORY

The City of New London, founded by John Winthrop in 1646, has a rich history intimately intertwined with the political and economic history of the United States.



Established on one of the finest natural harbors in the original thirteen colonies, at the mouth of the Thames River, it soon became a center of maritime activity. That tradition has carried the city from a history of privateering during the Revolutionary War, to whaling during the nineteenth century, to the submarine base of the twentieth.

All of this history has been reflected in the area known today as New London's CBD. The center of pre-revolutionary New London, its streets were laid out in the 17th century, and despite the many losses of recent years, the area is still dotted with significant 18th and 19th century structures. Its central location was reflected in the location of the new courthouse in 1784, on the highly significant (and symbolic) site at the top of State Street overlooking the river. As the city and its region began to grow in the 19th century, a highly diverse body of commercial, office, and retail activities accumulated within the area.

Developed long before the more outlying communities of the region contained more than local shopping and business areas, downtown New London served a population extending far beyond the confined boundaries of the city. In many ways, however, it was a schizophrenic area. While State Street emerged as the retail and service heart of the region, containing activities not directly linked to the maritime economy, other areas such

as Bank Street were oriented directly to the waterfront, serving shippers, ship captains, and their crews. It is somewhat ironic, indeed, that many long-time New London residents commented that today's Bank Street is, if anything, a pale reflection of the brawling, rough and ready seaport street of the not too distant past.

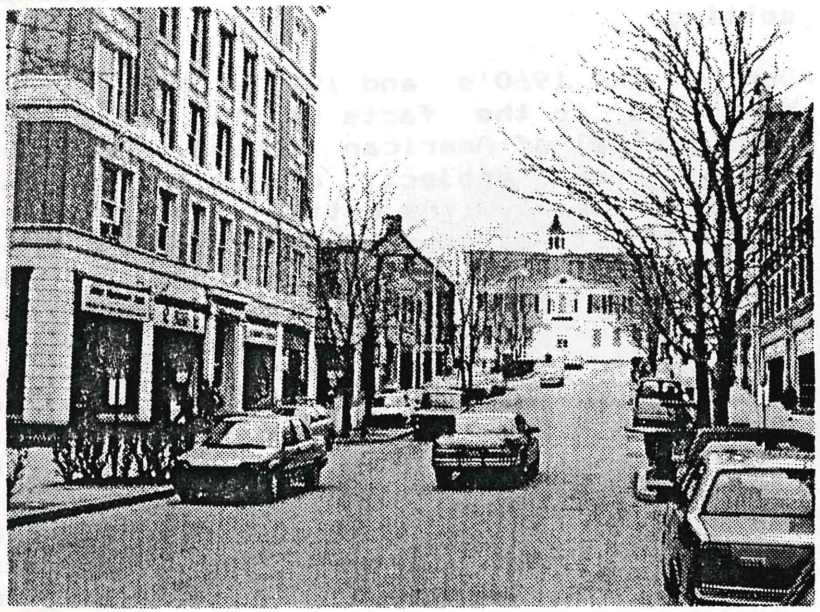
The fact is, however, that the most active periods of Bank Street and State Street in all probability did not coincide. With the decline and eventual disappearance of the whaling industry, Bank Street went into a decline in the late 19th century, at precisely the point when State Street, with the construction of the major banks and office blocks that still give it its distinctive character, was emerging as a regional retail, service, and business center. By the 1920's that function had reached its peak. As a regional transportation as well as business center, linked with the northeast by the once-proud New Haven Railroad and a network of coastal steamers, New London's CBD was The Center. It was the dynamic and vital heart of a growing region.

That pattern continued for many years after World War II. Indeed, in view of some of the concerns expressed today, it is notable that for many years after the end of the war, commercial vitality on State Street coexisted - if perhaps not entirely comfortably - with the raucous, and intermittently violent, life of Bank Street. By the 1960's, however, things had begun to change. With the postwar transformation of American life created by the automobile, New London's suburbs grew rapidly in population and began to develop their own economic centers. Even before the first large scale suburban retail development, the central retail function of downtown New London had already been compromised by the development of automobile-oriented shop- ping centers within the city boundaries but unrelated to the CBD, along Frontage Road and Colman Street. At the same time, suburbanization drew much of the middle class population out of the city, reinforcing the position of New London as a working class and lower income community within a largely middle class suburban and rural regional setting.

During the 1960's and 1970's New London responded to the facts of its decline in ways typical of American cities. A massive urban renewal project, during the course of which nearly the entire CBD north of State Street was leveled and rebuilt, took place. Subsequently, the decision was made to convert State Street into a pedestrian mall, and - in the expectation that a new name would reinvigorate what was perceived as a tired image - to rename it to Captain's Walk. These solutions to economic decline were consistent with representative American thinking about planning and development during the period. Following the lead of its near neighbor, New Haven, which had received

national publicity beginning in the 1950's for its urban renewal efforts, New London cannot be faulted for having pursued what today, in the cold bright light of hindsight, appear to have been illusory, and perhaps even destructive, strategies.

While it will never be possible to determine with precision the economic effects of the city's urban renewal efforts, it is clear that New London's economic decline has continued. It is worth noting that Bank Street, in many respects the CBD's most lively economic environment, was spared the demolition that typified the initial urban renewal process. The continued suburbanization of the region's retail economy, which



culminated with the opening of the Crystal Mall in Waterford in 1984, effectively eliminated the role of the New London CBD as a competitive general retail center. At the same time, whatever its economic effects may or may not have been, as people have developed new respect for New London's historical and architectural tradition, they have come to realize that the urban renewal activities have had a deleterious effect on the quality of life in the city's CBD. Thus, it is clear that a new direction is needed, one that is capable of addressing the very real problems of the CBD, while at the same time reflecting its continuing strengths.

A TROUBLED PRESENT

The New London Central Business District today reflects a complex, and often seemingly inconsistent, pattern of strengths and weaknesses. Furthermore, as became clear to the R/UDAT team through extended discussions with people who live and work in New London, many of the problems of the CBD have as much - or perhaps more - to do with perception and image than with objective and verifiable reality. Before we can begin to focus on the strengths, however, we must be able to identify and assess the problems and difficulties which exist today in the CBD.

Many of these difficulties are closely tied to the problems, again both real and perceived, of the city of New London as a whole. Seen from a regional perspective, New London is the older, poorer, core city within a newer, more affluent, sub- urban region. Compared to its region, New London has lower household incomes, fewer homeowners and single famiy houses, more members of racial and ethnic minorities, and - although this is far from certain - more crime and other negative social phenomena. Without wishing to suggest that New London has no problems, or that its problems are trivial, the fact remains that compared to other older urban centers - including cities such as New Haven or Bridgeport in Connecticut, or Newark, Camden, or St. Louis elsewhere - New London's strengths are more pronounced, and its problems more manageable. Indeed, many residents of New London have a far more negative image of their own city than appears to be justified. New London is an attractive community, socio-economically as well as visually, which has retained a diverse population, ethnically and economically. Although more densely populated than its neighbors, at roughly 4,650 people per square mile, it is closer in density to the older suburbs of larger cities than to those cities (the density of Hoboken, New Jersey, for example, is nearly 45,000 people per square mile). Even though New London has more poor residents than its neighbors, it is not overwhelmed by an impoverished, dependent population as are many other cities. Despite perceptions held by many, and despite specific problems, it is still a far safer city than most other older urban centers. The people of New London have good grounds to feel far more positively about their city in its present state than they do.

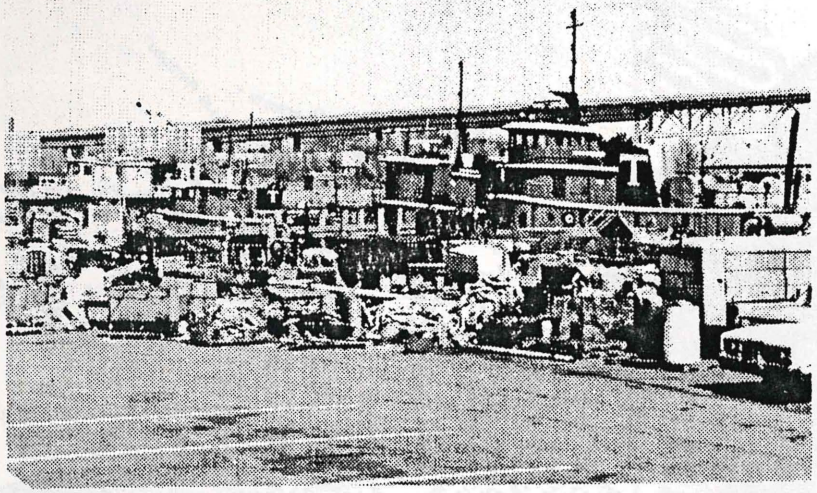
Many of these problems directly affect the CBD. Although 10,000 or more suburban residents come to work in New London, many in the CBD, they do not remain in the city after work, nor do they return in large numbers to shop. The CBD is perceived as a dangerous high crime area, although in reality the evidence makes clear that little crime actually takes place downtown. Certain patterns, however,

contribute to a perception of crime. Most notable is what people have called the "creepy" or "scary" character of Captain's Walk after the end of the working day. In that eerie atmosphere, the presence of a handful of idlers hanging out in the area can have a disproportionate psychological effect. Similarly, the continued - although visibly toned down from years past - character of Bank Street as a "sailor's street" with its bars and occasional drunks, contributes to the perceptions of downtown as a dangerous place.

These perceptions are closely related to the lack of other, particularly pedestrian, activity in key sections of the CBD. Walking down Captain's Walk, one sees large numbers of vacant store fronts. Of those ground level floors that are occupied, few are oriented toward general shopping, or provide any visual interest - banks, stockbrokers, and government offices are more prominent than retail stores. Above the stores, gaping windows herald building after building containing vacant office or loft space. Elsewhere in the CBD, the physical environment is no more inviting. Boarded up stores, large vacant lots used for parking, or the cold, sterile, buildings - often standing well back from the street - of the urban renewal area, reinforce the hostility with which downtown streets greet visitor or passerby. At the same time, there is little residential population in the CBD, that could both create activity after hours support more diverse retail and service facilities. In some respects, it is not the presence of idlers so much as the absence of anybody else that triggers the negative perception of downtown New London.

It should be clear that New London's CBD no longer plays a major role in the general retail trade of its region, and that it is not likely to do so in the future. In Southeastern Connecticut, as in nearly every other American region centered on a small order city, the bulk of the retail trade has relocated to suburbia. With over 80% of the regional population located outside of the city and oriented to a mobile, automobile- based, life style, that trade is not likely to return to the city's CBD. There are, though, individual retail merchants who have effectively marketed their offerings and been able to find an economic niche within the region, continuing to maintain their economic viability.

At the same time as it has lost much of its role as a retail center, New London has retained, and in some cases expanded, its role as a center in other respects. This is another area in which perception and reality diverge. Downtown New London has far more strengths than many people appreciate. It is still a major regional center in many respects. It is the center of banking and finance activity for the region. It is the legal and judicial center for the region. It is a major



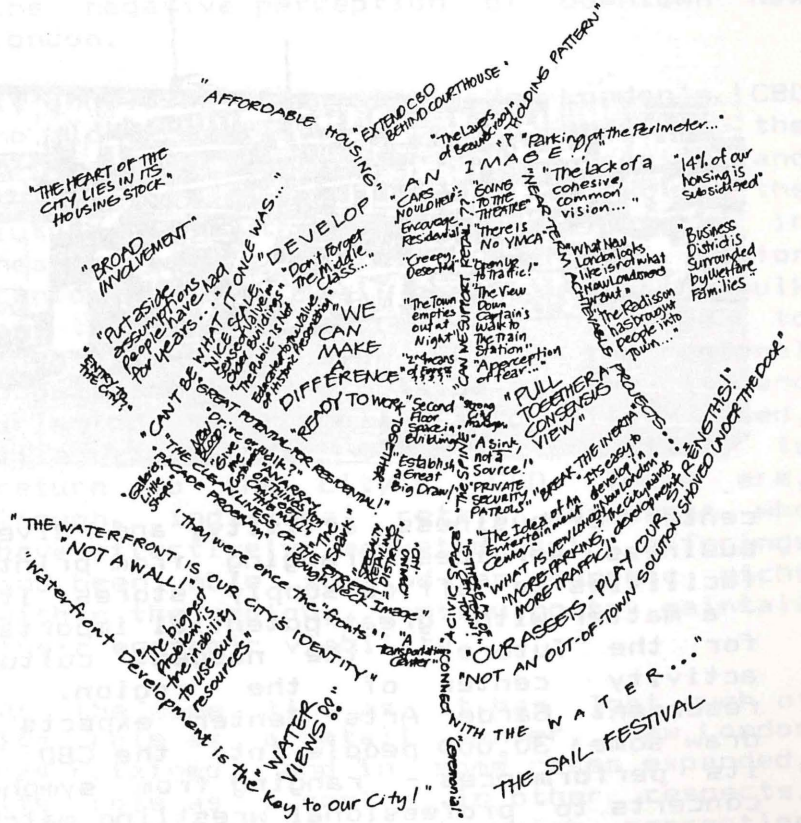
center of business activity, and diverse business services, ranging from printing facilities to office supply stores. It is - a matter with great potential importance for the future - the nascent cultural activity center of the region. The resurgent Garde Arts Center expects to draw some 30,000 people into the CBD for its performances - ranging from symphony concerts to professional wrestling matches - during the 1988-1989 season.

Perhaps most important is the continuing role of New London's CBD as a center of transportation and tourist movement. New London is located at the heart of a region in which intense tourist activity takes place. As a transportation center, the greater part of that activity passes through the city. Although the construction of Interstate 95 did incalculable damage to the neighborhood fabric of the community, it did provide direct highway access to and from downtown New London for the entire northeastern United States. The Amtrak station offers over 30 trains every day along the main rail corridor from Boston to Washington. Finally, immediately across from the railroad lines, along the Thames River, ferries leave regularly serving Fishers Island, Block Island, and both Orient and Montauk Points on Long Island. As a result of these connections, it is estimated that as many as half a million tourists and visitors pass through New London. Although relatively few of these vistors remain in the city for any length of time, they represent a very real potential resource.

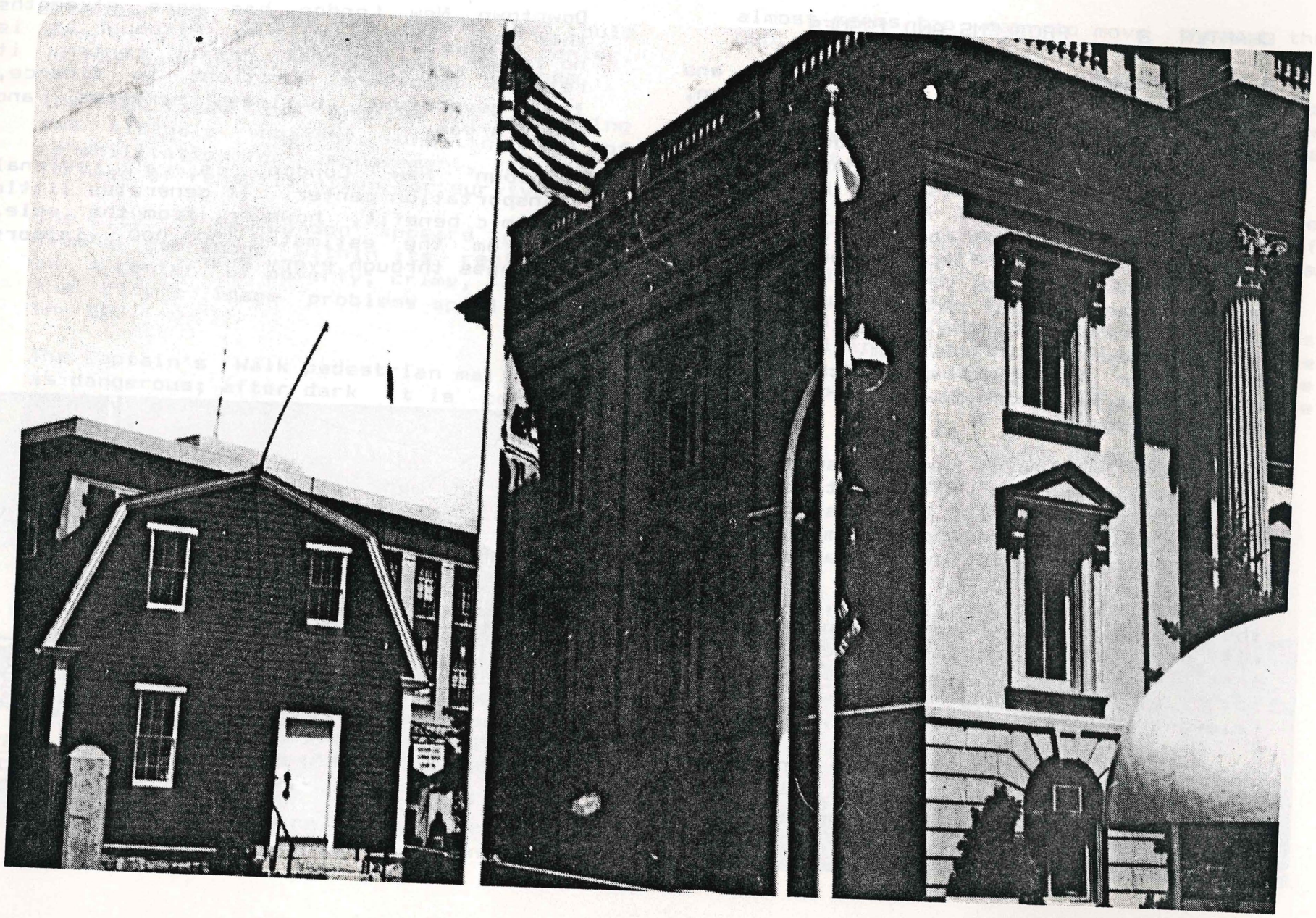
A particular indicator of the continued strengh of the CBD, something little known to the general public, is the sustained interest of the real estate industry in the area. Despite the large number of vacant store fronts and upper floors, speaker after speaker reiterated the point that whenever commercial properties come on the market, they are bought quickly, generally at substantial prices. Although much of the general public may have lost faith in New London's downtown, the real estate market continues to believe in its future, and in the continued appreciation

of its property values.

The New London CBD, in short, presents a complex and mixed picture. It has its difficulties and weaknesses, but it has its particular strengths, on which it is possible to build a future. In the next section we will discuss the particular issues and problems that must be addressed with respect to the CBD - many of which have been raised already in this section. After that section, we will describe the form which a future for downtown New London - with effective direction and leadership from both private and public sectors - might take.


"AFFORDABLE HOUSING"
"EXTEND CBD BEHIND COURTHOUSE"
"THE HEART OF THE CITY LIES IN ITS HOUSING STOCK"
"BROAD INVOLVEMENT"
"DEVELOP"
"WE CAN MAKE A DIFFERENCE"
"READY TO WORK"
"CAN'T BE"
"GREAT POTENTIAL FOR RESIDENTIAL!"
"PULL TOGETHER"
"CONSENSUS VIEW"
"AN IMAGE..."
"The Lack of a cohesive, common vision..."
"14% of our housing is subsidized"
"Business District is Surrounded by Welfare Families"
"What New London looks like is not what New Londoners want"
"The Radisson has brought people into Town..."
"Parking at the Perimeter..."
"There is No YMCA"
"The View Down Captain's Walk to The Main Station"
"Appreciation of Fear..."
"The Town empties out at Night"
"Second Floor Space is Exciting!"
"A Sink, not a Source!"
"Establish a Great Big Draw!"
"PRIVATE SECURITY PATROLS"
"THE WATERFRONT IS OUR CITY'S IDENTITY"
"NOT A WALL!"
"They were once the "fronts""
"A transportation Center"
"The biggest problem is the inability to use our resources"
"Waterfront Development is the Key to our City!"
"WATER VIEWS 80%"
"OUR ASSETS - PLAY OUR STRENGTHS!"
"NOT AN OUT-OF-TOWN SOLUTION"
"MORE TRAFFIC!"
"WHAT IS NEW LONDON?"
"BREAK THE INERTIA"
"NOT A WALL!"
"CIVIC SPACE"
"CONNECT WITH THE WATER..."
"THE SAIL FESTIVAL"

Problems and Issues



CHAPTER 2 PROBLEMS AND ISSUES

A vast number of separate issues and problems confront the city of New London, and affect the manner in which it will be able to deal with the future of its Central Business District. Many, perhaps most, of these issues are beyond the ability of the R/UDAT team, and perhaps beyond the ability of the city as well, to solve. The limited fiscal resources, the inadequate housing, are structural problems that affect not only New London. The errors of the past, however unfortunate, are in the past. No one will bring back the 18th and 19th century houses that were torn down under the urban renewal program.

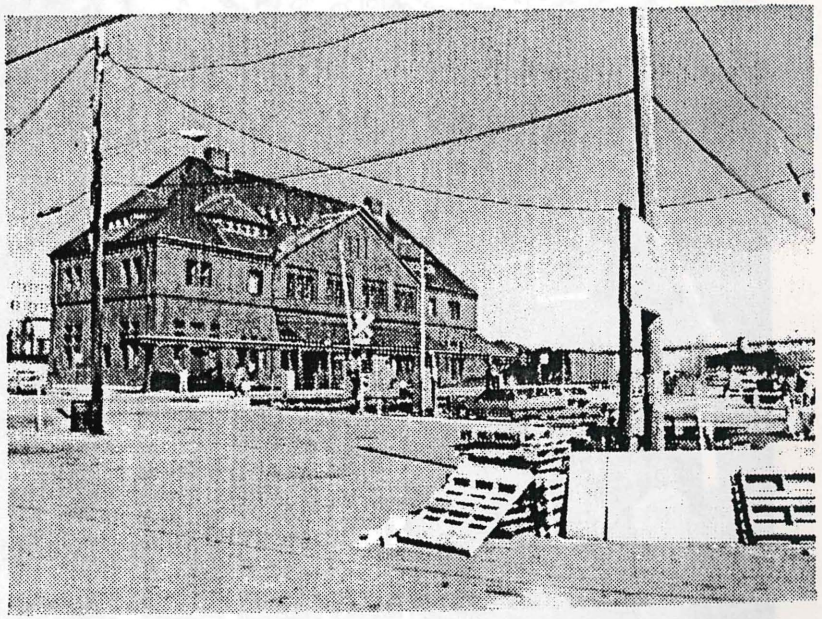
Even after excluding these issues, a long list still remains. This list served as the starting point for the vision of the future, and the specific recommendations, that appear in the following chapters.

The Central Business District, which is the historic and symbolic center of the city of New London, is not holding. It has lost its traditional functions, but has not yet established a new function relevant to present-day reality.

Some areas, particularly Bank Street, as well as individual merchants elsewhere, have survived by finding and occupying individual niches.

Downtown New London has more strengths than many people believe. Although it is no longer a regional retail center, it retains important functions in finance, law, government, business services, and other areas.

Downtown New London is a regional transportation center. It generates little economic benefit, however, from the role, or from the estimated 500,000 visitors that pass through every year.



Downtown New London has assets that could make it a major regional cultural center. It has just begun to capitalize on them.

The CBD faces the problem of containing two historic theaters, one in need of rehabilitation for improvement, the other in need of rehabilitation for survival.

The city of New London appears to suffer from a bad image within its region. Seen as a center of poverty, crime, and dirt, the city's image problems spill over to the CBD.

The Captain's Walk pedestrian mall is seen as dangerous; after dark it is considered "creepy" or "scary".

Despite statistics that show the CBD to be a low crime area, many people, both residents of New London and suburban residents, are reluctant to venture into the area. People who work there do not stick around after work.

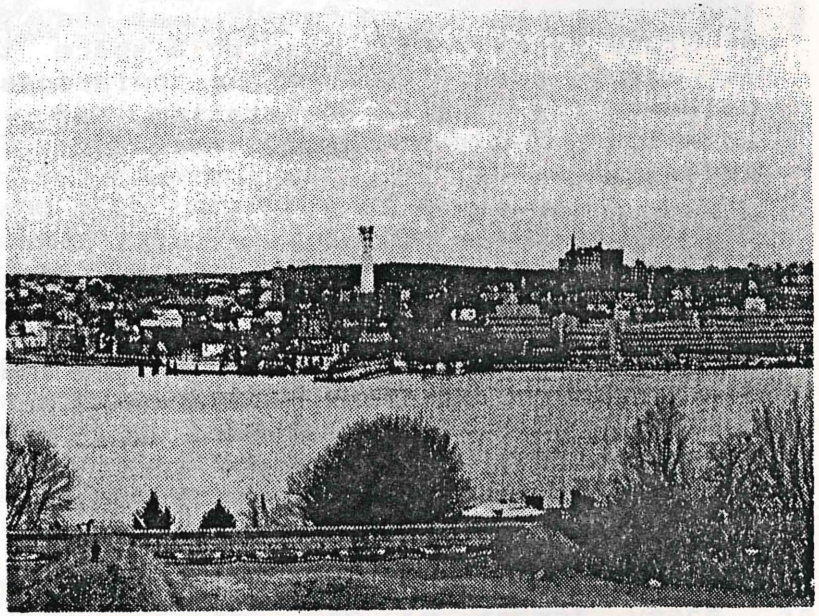
Despite the millions spent to provide parking spaces in downtown, many people still consider parking a problem. People appear to be unwilling to walk more than a very short distance from a parking place to their destination within the CBD.

The realignment of traffic patterns does not seem to have helped the downtown. It almost seems too easy to move through the CBD.

The downtown lacks definition. People don't sense when they've arrived; before they realize they're in downtown, they've come out the other end.

Signage doesn't help people find out where to go. One way street systems, location of parking areas, discourage people from coming into town, or from staying there.

The design of the pedestrian mall obscures the buildings, makes it difficult to see what's open and what's closed. The tradition of an open axis from the Parade



to the courthouse has been lost. Vast amounts of both storefront space and upper floor space in the CBD, particularly on the pedestrian mall, lie empty or underutilized.

Redevelopment and highway construction have obliterated vast amounts of New London's architectural and historical heritage, yet a vast amount still remains to be conserved.

Important historical buildings are still threatened with demolition. An example is the Hygenic Restaurant building, a superb 1840's structure, at Bank and Golden Streets.

The treatment of the Parade, at the foot of State Street, has created a space that is rarely used, impairs the relationship between the railroad station and the street, and creates hazards for pedestrians.

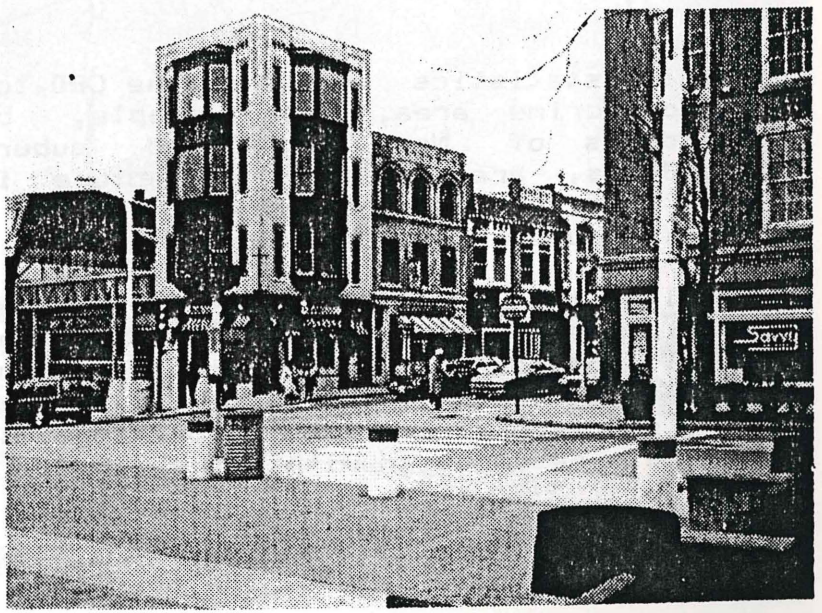
The Nathan Hale schoolhouse will have to be moved once again. A more appropriate permanent location needs to be identified.

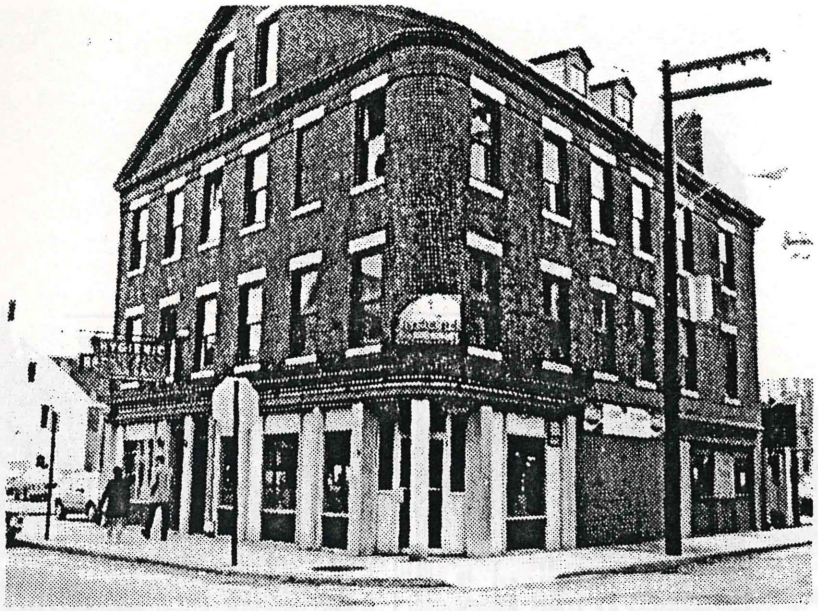
Although the city is located on the Thames River, there are few locations in the downtown, from which a good view of the river is available. Except during the periodic festivals, neither residents nor visitors obtain a clear sense of the maritime heritage of the community.

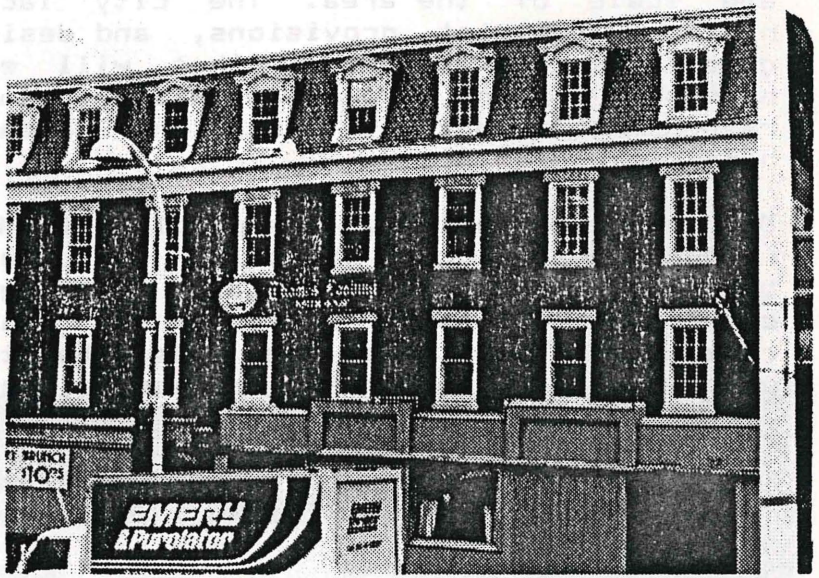
Outside of City Pier, there is little public access available to the waterfront.

The private sector, including business leaders, merchants, developers, and others, is fragmented, with many individuals pursuing personal agendas and priorities, with little attention given to the larger needs of downtown.

Although the city is fiscally sound and provides adequate basic services, it lacks the resources to focus the attention needed on the downtown, with respect to level of services or systematic development planning.







The city has only begun recently to develop a basic planning and development management capacity. Many decisions were made in the past without adequate planning input.

Racial tension, although muted, is present throughout the city. Some people tend to blame the poor and minority residents of the city for many of the problems of the CBD.

Minority residents, many of whom live in close proximity to the CBD, feel disenfranchised, and lack a stake in revitalization of the downtown.

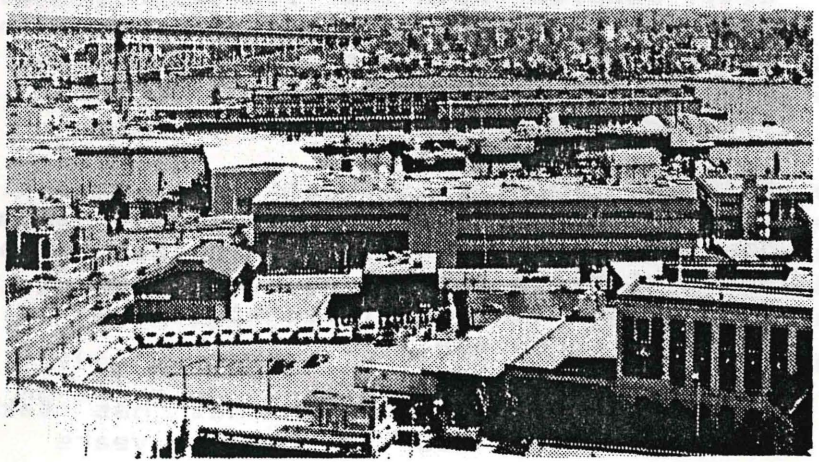
The shortage of affordable housing in the city, coupled with the low vacancy rates and high incidence of substandard housing, places many low income families at risk of displacement through the effects of downtown revitalization.

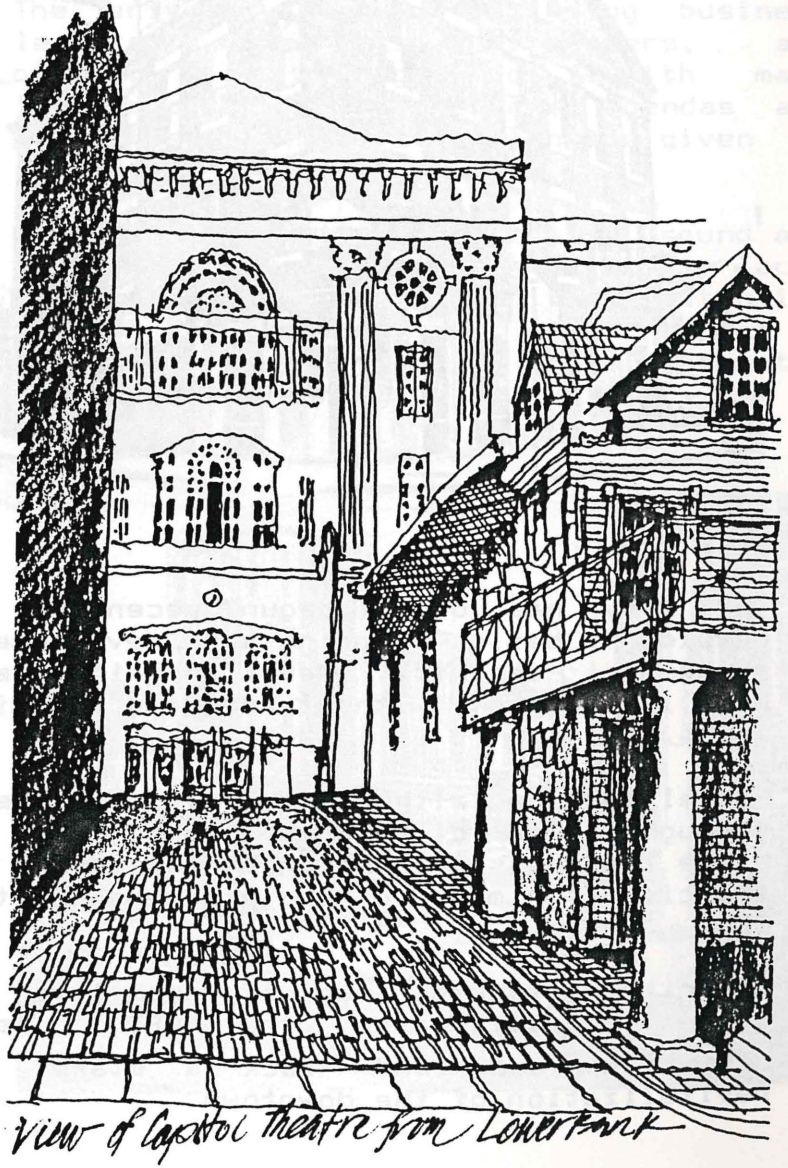
Although the city is actively supportive of development, particularly in and around downtown, many existing regulations and administrative practices may impede or discourage the activities that the city seeks to encourage.

Much of the development that has taken place in the CBD in recent years is

incompatible with the historic character and scale of the area. The city lacks historic district provisions, and design guidelines and standards, that will ensure that future development will enhance rather than detract from the area's historic character.

Despite the problems, the people of New London, their local officals, and their business community retain a deep commitment to their city. It is that commitment that gives one hope that the problems can be successful addressed, and a better future created.





View of Capitol theatre from Lower Park

A Vision of the Future

DOWNTOWN NEW LONDON: A VISION OF THE FUTURE

New London is in a strong position to build upon the strengths of its past and present in order to create a dynamic future for its downtown, a future of which coming generations will be proud. Creating such a future will require the leadership and citizens of the community not only to frame a new vision of what the downtown can be, but to abandon long-held myths and regrets left over from its past. We believe the community is ready to take that step.

FALSE VISIONS

It must be stated clearly what the future of the New London CBD cannot be. It cannot be a literal recreation of its past. We must try to recapture the best of New London's past, in terms of the rich and varied visual character of the old 18th and 19th century city, but we cannot capture those parts of the past that are gone forever. The most important of these is the role of the CBD as the principal retail center for the region. That role is gone, eliminated by suburbanization and the dominance of the automobile.

There are other visions of the future which may conceivably be possible, but are nonetheless not desirable. One such vision, which appeals to some people within the community, is of a new downtown oriented principally, if not entirely, to tourism, consisting of a series of tourist attractions. Downtown New London should become attractive to tourists, and should contain features that will draw tourists, and encourage people passing through New London to stay, for a few hours or even a few days. Tourism should not, however, be the principal focus of the CBD.

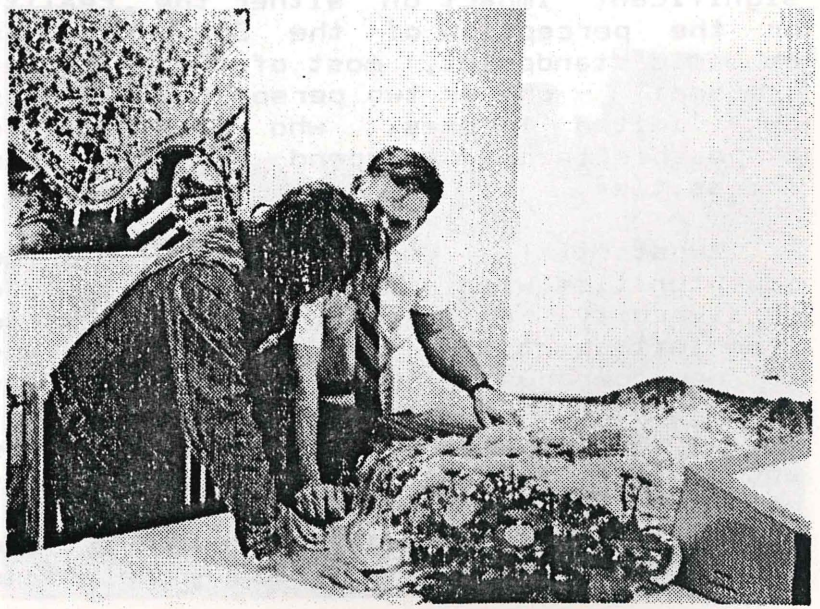
For a community's downtown to become a tourist attraction, in which the local shops and businesses are oriented more toward visitors than to the community's own residents, is to alienate the downtown from the community, and the community from the downtown. Perhaps, in a small, affluent, town such as Mystic or Provincetown this alienation may not affect the basic social fabric of the community. In an ethnically, racially, and economically diverse community such as New London, where large numbers of people are deeply involved with the downtown, it cannot but be destructive to the integrity of the community. New London's downtown is too important to the life of the community to allow the city's residents to become strangers in their own community.

Furthermore, a downtown need not be designed as a tourist attraction in order to attract tourists. If New London can create a downtown that captures a rich feeling of its history, and a sense of place conducive to pedestrian movement, accompanied by a growing number of activities - stores, restaurants, cultural activities - oriented as much to residents

of the city and the region as to visitors, it will find that it has developed the capacity to build a strong tourist industry. If it combines those assets with an effective marketing program, and a strong visual image for downtown that draws the visitor into the area, tourists will follow, enhancing an already viable downtown.

Another vision of the future against which we would warn the community is one in which the poor and the racial minorities who are a part of today's New London have no part. Many people, groping for reasons to explain the decline of a once-proud downtown area, unfortunately tend to pin much of the blame for that decline on the city's low income and minority population. Without wanting to minimize the reality of the tensions that exist between different parts of the city's population, and the reality of some of the social problems which the city must address, we see no legitimate basis for this claim. The poor are as much victims of the decline of the CBD as anyone else; more so, indeed, than many affluent households with more resources and more options.

This issue will be discussed in more detail below. At this point, it is important to stress that New London's low income and minority population, whose ancestors have been here at least as long as many of the city's more affluent residents, should benefit equally in the resurgence of the city's downtown. It would be a terrible mistake to treat the revival of the CBD as a means by which low income, black, and hispanic people can be removed from downtown New London and its vicinity.



TOWARD A TWENTY-FOUR HOUR DOWNTOWN

The central element in our vision of downtown New London's future is its transformation into a twenty-four hour downtown through the creation of a strong, visible, residential character within the area. There are already a substantial number of residents in the CBD. We estimate that there are 320 to 340 occupied housing units within the area bounded by Tilley, Huntington, and Federal Streets, a number that does not include the much larger number of households in areas surrounding the downtown. Although Starr Street is the most well-known residential section in the area, it accounts for only a small percentage of the total number of households in the area. These households do not have a significant impact on either the reality or the perception of the CBD. From an economic standpoint, most of the families are small - one or two person - households on limited incomes, who have little disposable income to spend on other than necessities.

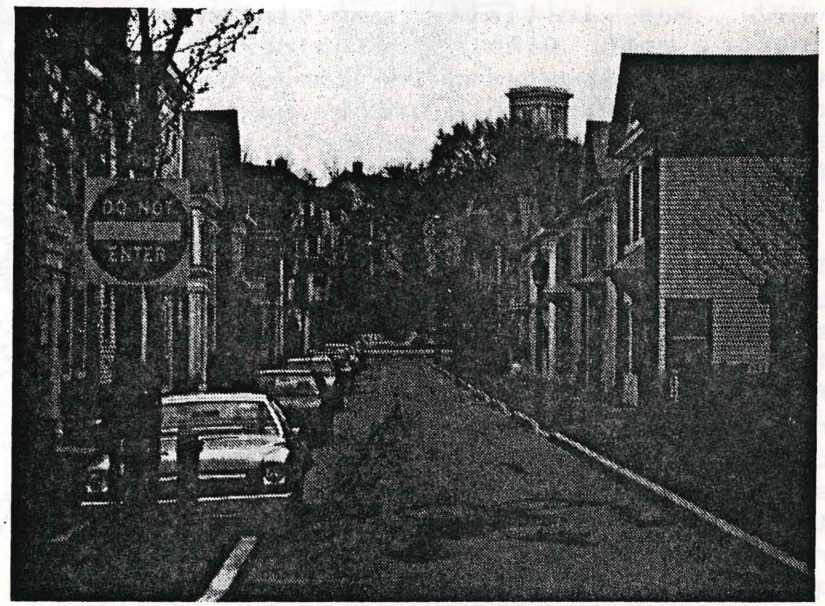
A substantial increase in housing opportunities within the CBD could include a diversity of housing types - ranging from loft apartments in existing buildings to new townhouses constructed on vacant sites and on the waterfront - and attract a diverse population ranging from artists and writers to affluent suburban empty nesters and young professional couples. These families would be attracted by the visual character of the area - the charm of the old buildings no less than the waterfront - by the employment opportunities, by the ready access offered by the transportation connections available, and by the growing variety of activities, ranging from waterfront festivals to the programs at the Garde Arts Center, offered in the area.

The growing presence of more and more resident households - including many likely to take an active interest in the future of the community - is capable of becoming the catalyst for change within the New London CBD. The growing presence of residents and their visitors in the area and on the streets will increase the sense of security and safety within the area, encouraging more people living outside the CBD to come in, and overcoming the negative perceptions of the area held by so many. The increased buying power of relatively more affluent households, who are likely to shop in downtown stores by preference, will strengthen existing retail facilities; gradually, over time, they will become the economic nucleus that will encourage other stores, restaurants, and service establishments to come into being. Finally, the construction of attractive new housing on vacant lots, the rehabilitation of existing substandard housing in the CBD, coupled with the conversion of now vacant - and often derelict - commercial structures into housing, will restore the intense pedestrian character of the downtown, making it a more attractive destination

for tourists and visitors.

The economic base initiated by the expansion of the residential base of the area should be capable of almost infinite expansion as a chain reaction begins to take hold. Over 250,000 people live within a half hour or less of downtown New London; over 500,000 more people pass through New London every year, if only to change from train or car to ferry, on their way elsewhere. Within this area, the revitalized New London downtown has the potential to offer a unique visual experience; building on the existing business market, coupled with the additional resident market, the new stores and service establishments will begin to attract those suburban residents - of whom there are likely to be many - seeking a different environment than offered by the suburban shopping centers. Coupled with effective promotion of New London's remarkable profusion of historic houses and sites, the visually rich and pedestrian oriented environment created by the infilling of downtown will attract an increasing number of tourists. These diverse markets add up to a powerful economic stimulus for the community as a whole.

The creation of substantial new residential opportunities - for affluent as well as less affluent households - is the economic centerpiece of the rebuilding of downtown New London. If it is to be successful, it must be coupled with a wide range of design improvements designed to reestablish the visual and physical fabric of the downtown area. The next section will present a series of proposed improvements, which separately and together have the potential to integrate the existing features of the area, establish a positive series of visual edges and entrances for the downtown, and foster the recreation within the downtown of the intense pedestrian environment that is in keeping with the historical character and tradition of New London.



DESIGN ELEMENTS AND PHYSICAL IMPROVEMENTS

The New London CBD today contains numerous strong visual elements, such as the row of 19th buildings along Captain's Walk or the restored 1830's houses on Starr Street, the strong commercial district along Bank Street, or above all, the Thames River waterfront. At the same time, the area contains serious problems. Many of the strongest elements of the area have been compromised, as is the case with the Captain's Walk pedestrian mall, or the unsuccessful treatment of the historic gateway to the city, the Parade. The edges, or entrances, of the downtown area form another problem; as many people noted, drivers find themselves out of downtown even before they realize that they've arrived. Finally, the holes in what was initially an intense urban fabric, both within the older areas south of State Street and in the urban renewal area to the north, break up the fabric, and discourage both residents and visitors from exploring the area, and discovering its attractions.

The R/UDAT team developed a series of design recommendations to build on the strengths of the downtown area, in order to create a richer visual and physical framework for its revitalization. These recommendations must be implemented in the context of carefully framed design standards and review procedures to ensure that all development in the CBD enhances rather than detracts from the distinctive quality of the area.

- Strong edges, or gateways, should be established at each point at which people enter the CBD.

- Residential development should be encouraged throughout the downtown. In particular, new construction of high-density (but not high-rise) housing should be encouraged on vacant sites, subject to strict design guidelines, and adaptive reuse of vacant or under-utilized upper floor space for housing should be fostered, through both appropriate regulations and incentives.

- The Captain's Walk pedestrian mall should be reopened to vehicular use, and the street returned to its older name of State Street.

- The Parade, at the foot of State Street, should be redesigned to become an attractive area for pedestrian activity, and a more effective gateway to the city.

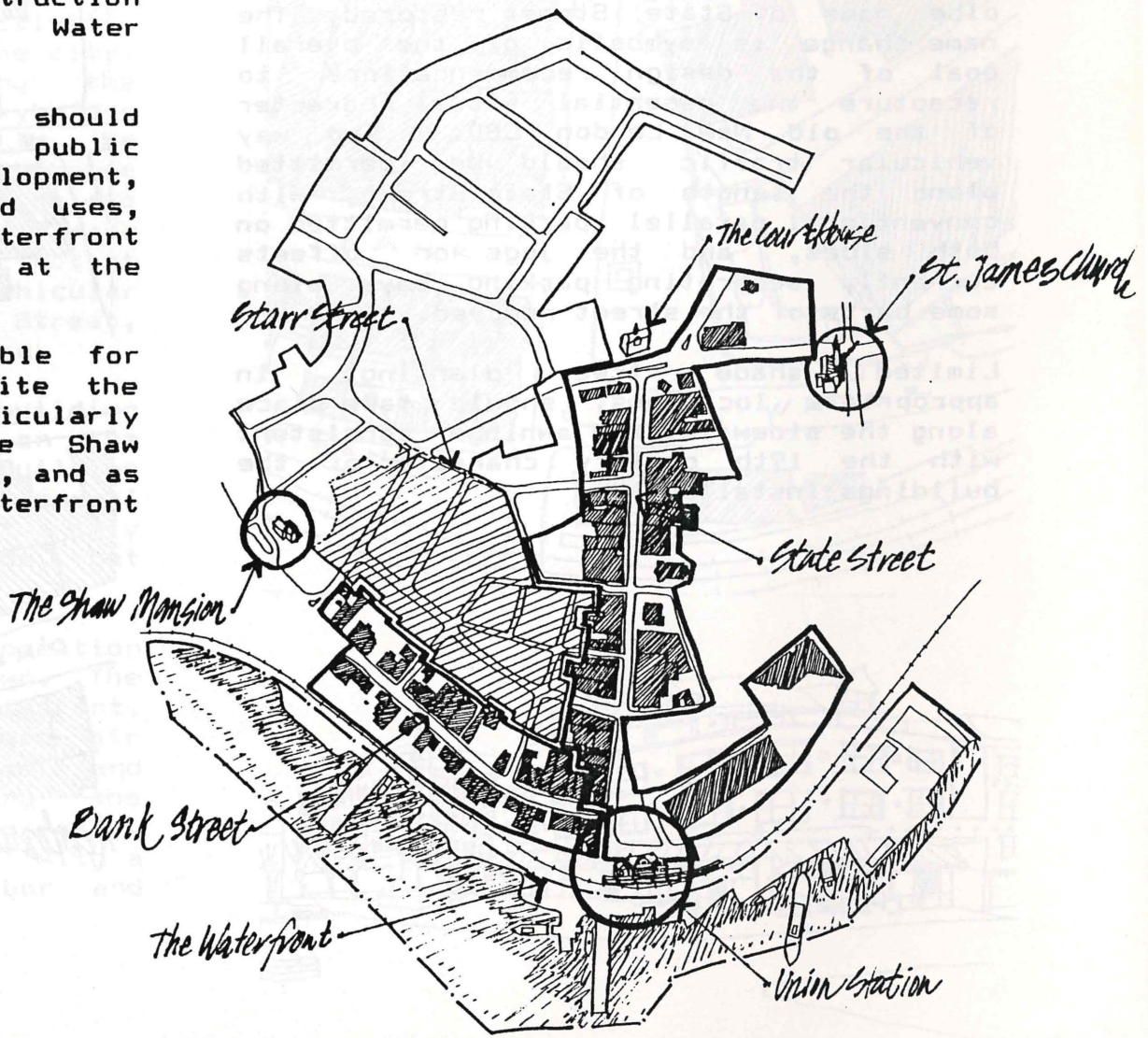
- A new street should be constructed parallel to Bank Street, designed for local traffic, and incentives should be provided to encourage property owners to create storefronts along the new street.

- A new mixed use parking and commercial building should be constructed on the California Fruit site at Broad and Huntington Streets, incorporating the existing building if possible.

- The proposed Mariner Square II mixed use building should be redesigned, and visually integrated with new construction between the parking garage and Water Street.

- The Thames River waterfront should remain largely open, with increased public access. Limited residential development, in conjunction with water-related uses, should be encouraged on waterfront property already owned by the city at the southern edge of the CBD.

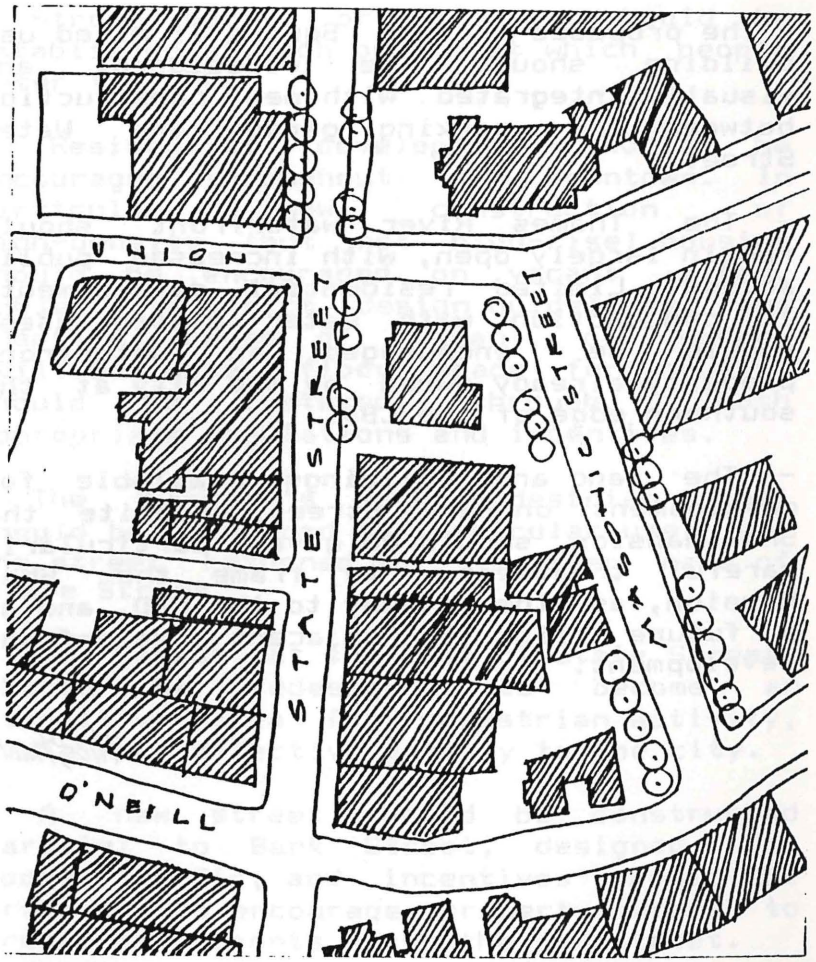
- The land and buildings available for development on Bank Street, opposite the Shaw Mansion, should be given particularly careful treatment, to frame the Shaw Mansion, as the gateway to the CBD, and as a future link to adjacent waterfront development.



STATE STREET

The Captain's Walk pedestrian mall should be reopened to vehicular traffic, and its older name of State Street restored. The name change is symbolic of the overall goal of the design recommendations to recapture the essential visual character of the old New London CBD. Two way vehicular traffic should be permitted along the length of State Street, with conventional parallel parking permitted on both sides, and the jogs or offsets currently separating parking bays along some parts of the street removed.

Limited shade tree planting, in appropriate locations, should take place along the sidewalk, and awnings consistent with the 19th century character of the buildings installed.



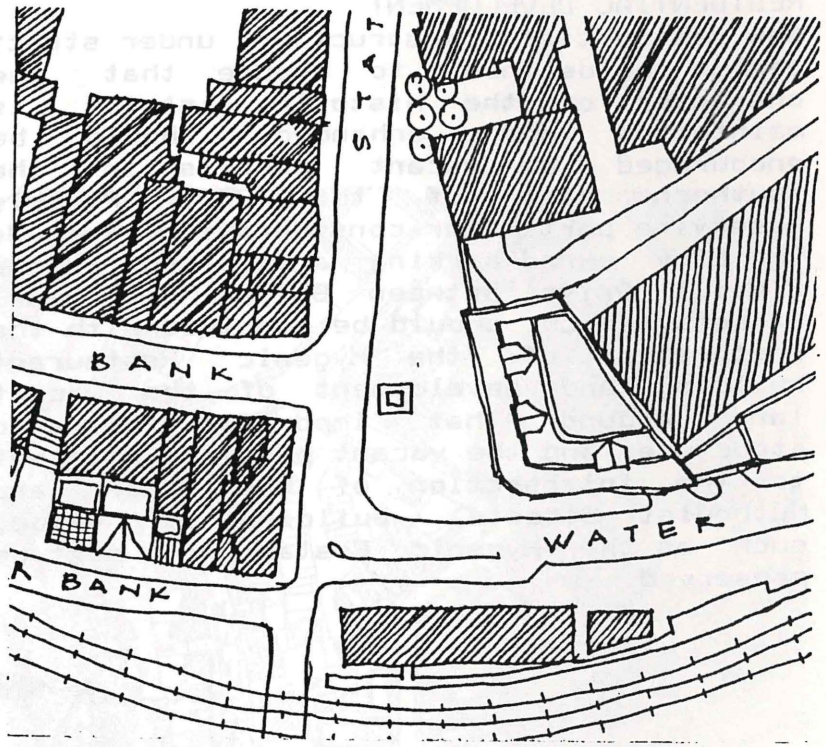
Restoration of State Street to Traffic.

THE PARADE

The Parade, at the foot of State Street, should be redesigned to become an attractive area for pedestrian activity, and a more effective gateway to the city. The existing structure, including the embankment and the pedestrian skybridge from the parking garage, should be removed. The Nathan Hale Schoolhouse should be relocated to a more appropriate location within the city. The new Parade will create a paved pedestrian precinct at the same grade as the adjacent vehicular way, readily accessible from State Street, Bank Street, and the Railroad Station.

Adjacent to the Parade, a new building should be constructed approximately on the site of the old Neptune Building demolished under the urban renewal program. This building will not only provide a visual frame for the Parade, but with its prominent location will

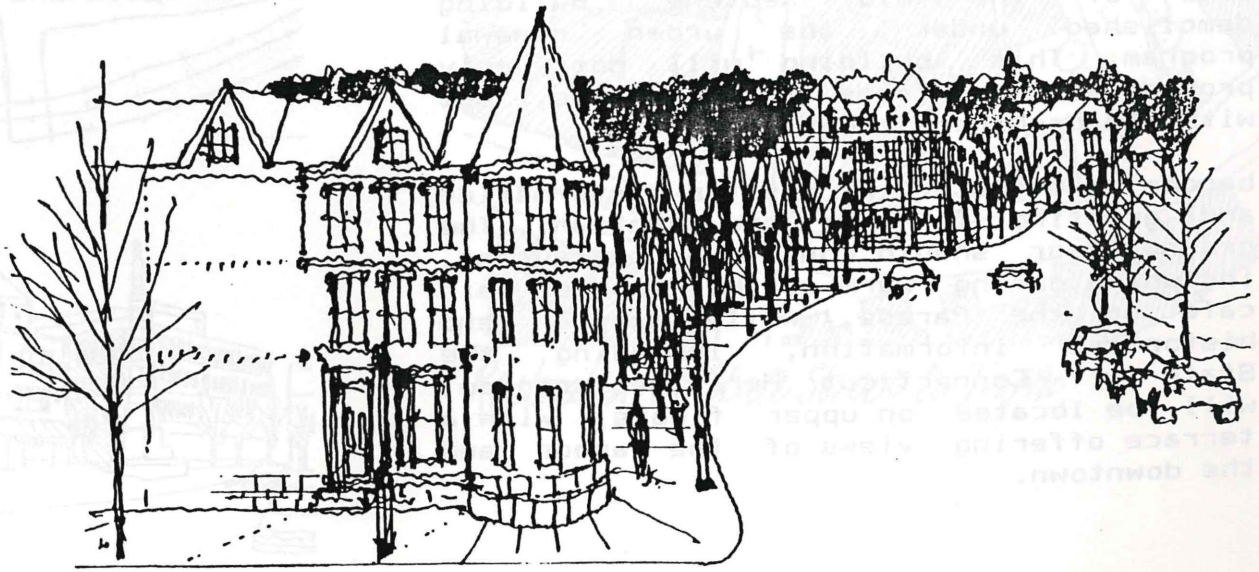
become the center of visitor information and greeting for the new downtown. The ground floor should contain a restaurant, including during warm weather an open air cafe on the Parade, while visitor and historical information, including the State of Connecticut Heritage program, will be located on upper floors, with a terrace offering views of the harbor and the downtown.



The Parade

RESIDENTIAL DEVELOPMENT

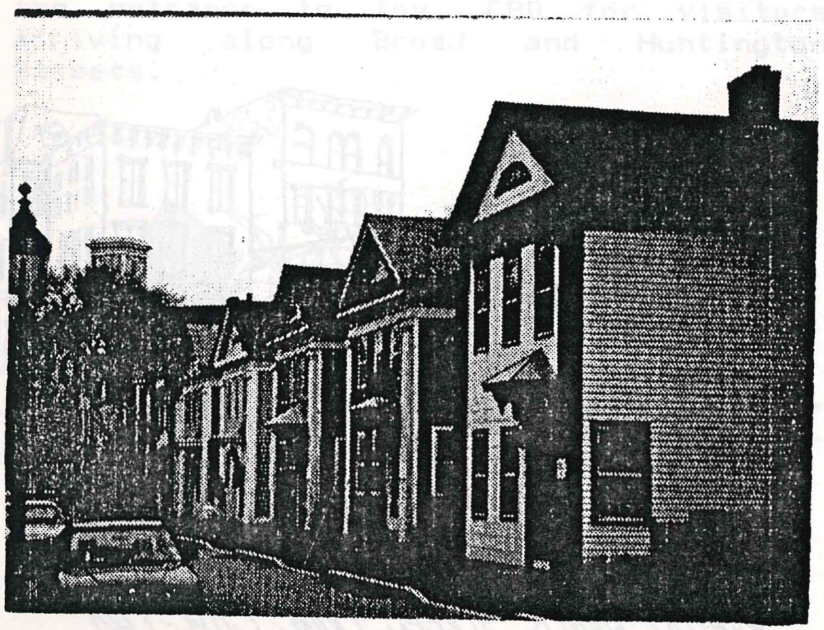
New residential construction, under strict design guidelines to ensure that the character of the historic district is maintained and enhanced, should be encouraged on vacant parcels in the southern part of the CBD. Parcels deserving particular consideration include the city owned parking area along Eugene O'Neill Drive between Golden and Pearl Streets, which should be combined with the restoration of the Hygenic Restaurant building and development of the vacant land around that important historic structure; and the vacant parcels adjacent to the intersection of Washington and Methodist Streets. Buildings of value, such as the Hygenic Restaurant, must be preserved.

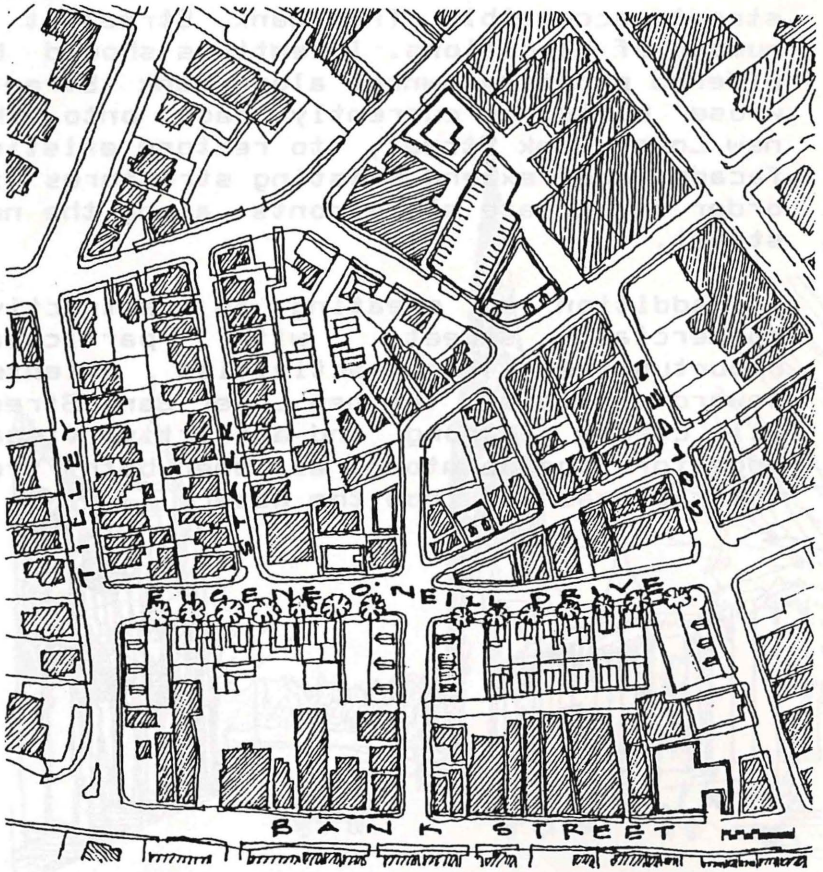


South View along Eugene O'Neill Drive

Appropriate incentives should be provided to encourage conversion of vacant and underutilized upper floor space, particularly along State and Bank Streets, to housing use. Apartments of a variety of shapes and sizes, including loft units, duplex units, etc., should be encouraged.

In addition to incentives, zoning and other regulations should be revised to eliminate impediments to construction of appropriately designed housing within the CBD, and the flexibility offered by State law with respect to code requirements governing restoration of historic structures should be fully utilized.



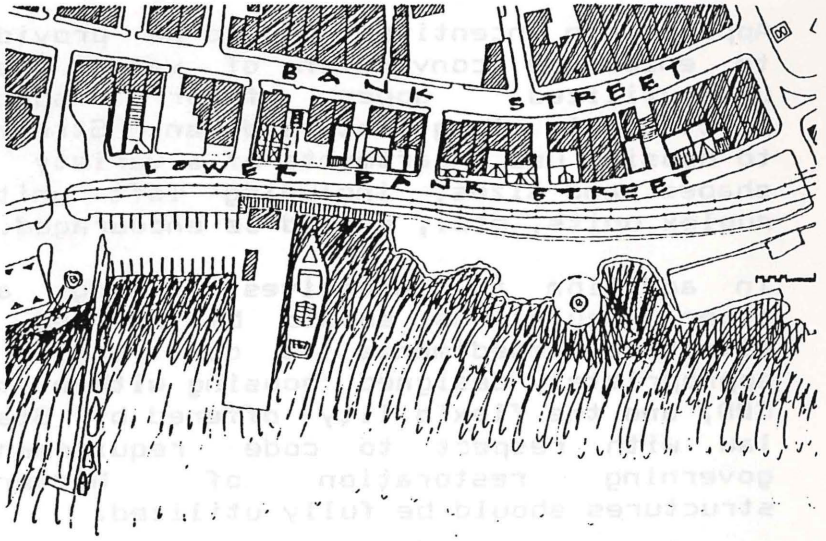


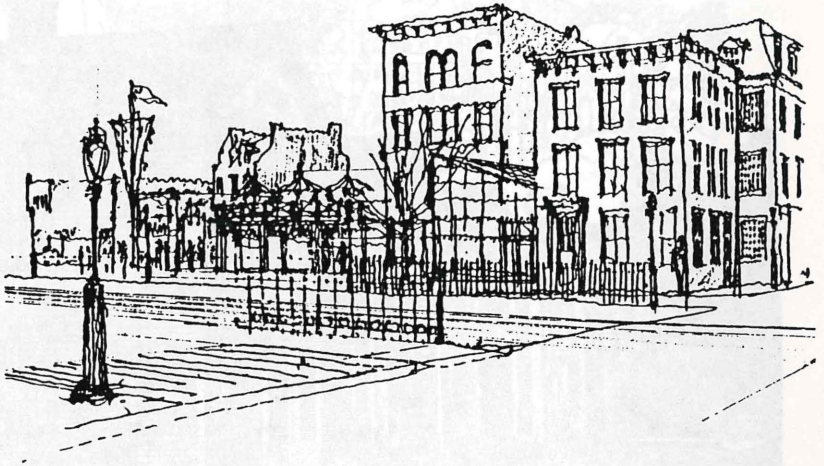
Infill Housing on Municipal Parking Lots

LOWER BANK STREET

A new street should be constructed along the city-owned property parallel to Bank Street, between the buildings along the eastern side of Bank Street and the Amtrak railroad line. This will be a local street, accessible from Bank Street at a number of locations. Incentives should be offered property owners along Bank Street, whose buildings currently back onto the new Lower Bank Street, to restore existing facades and extend existing structures in order to create storefronts along the new street.

In addition to creating an attractive commercial street, with particular opportunities for activities oriented toward visitors, the new Lower Bank Street will create a strong and attractive visual edge for the downtown, as seen both from the railroad and from the water.



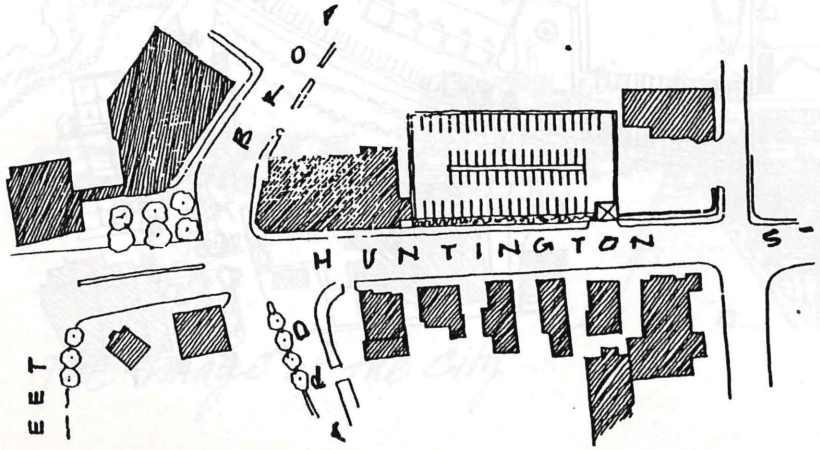


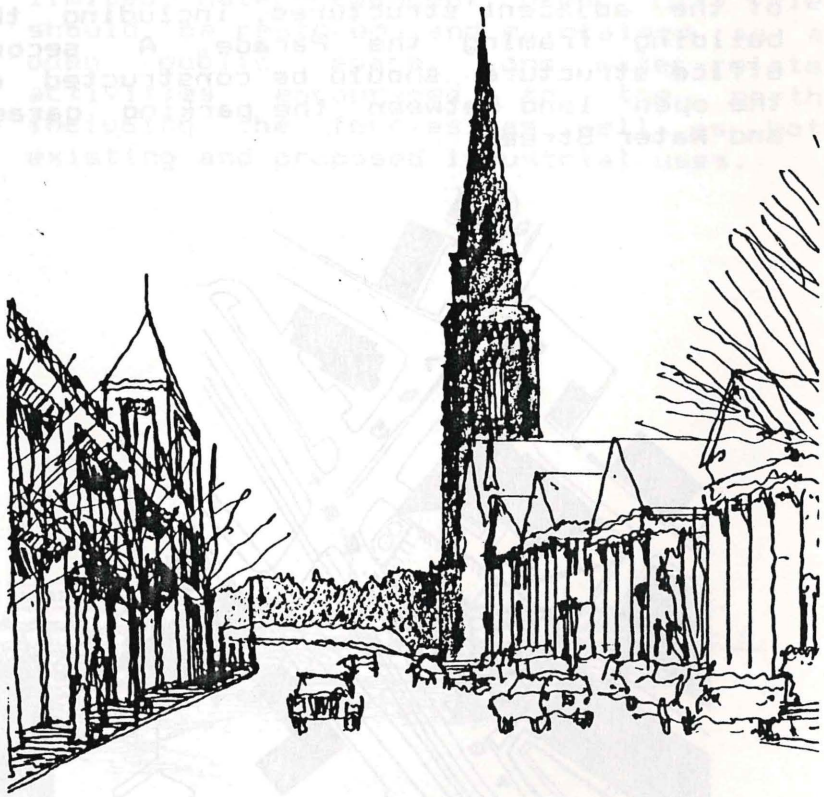
Lower Bank Street from City Pier

BROAD & HUNTINGTON STREETS

A new mixed use parking and commercial building should be constructed on the California Fruit site at Broad & Huntington Streets. If possible, the structure should incorporate the existing building; the existing uses, including the restaurant, the food store, and the drug store, should be incorporated into the new structure.

This facility, which can provide parking for 300 or more cars, will create additional parking resources for office and residential uses at the western edge of State Street, and for performances at the Garde Arts Center. It will also provide a strong visual gateway, defining the entrance to the CBD for visitors arriving along Broad and Huntington Streets.

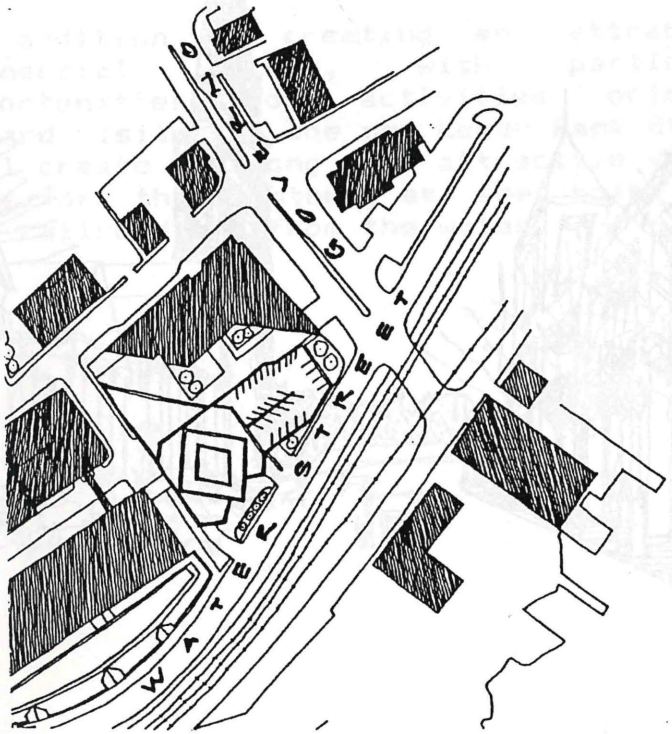




Huntington Gateway

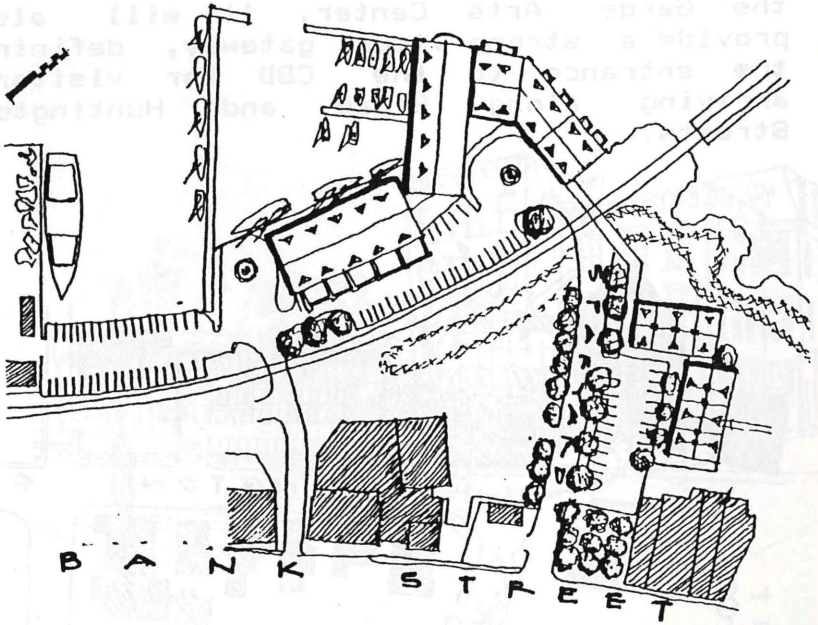
WATER STREET & MARINER SQUARE II

Water Street, between the Parade and Winthrop Boulevard, should be reinforced to become a strong edge for the downtown, and a resource for additional high quality office space. Mariner Square II should be redesigned to follow the street edge along its frontage, and to offer a mid-rise roof line not substantially different from that of the adjacent structures, including the building framing the Parade. A second office structure should be constructed on the open land between the parking garage and Water Street.



BANK STREET GATE

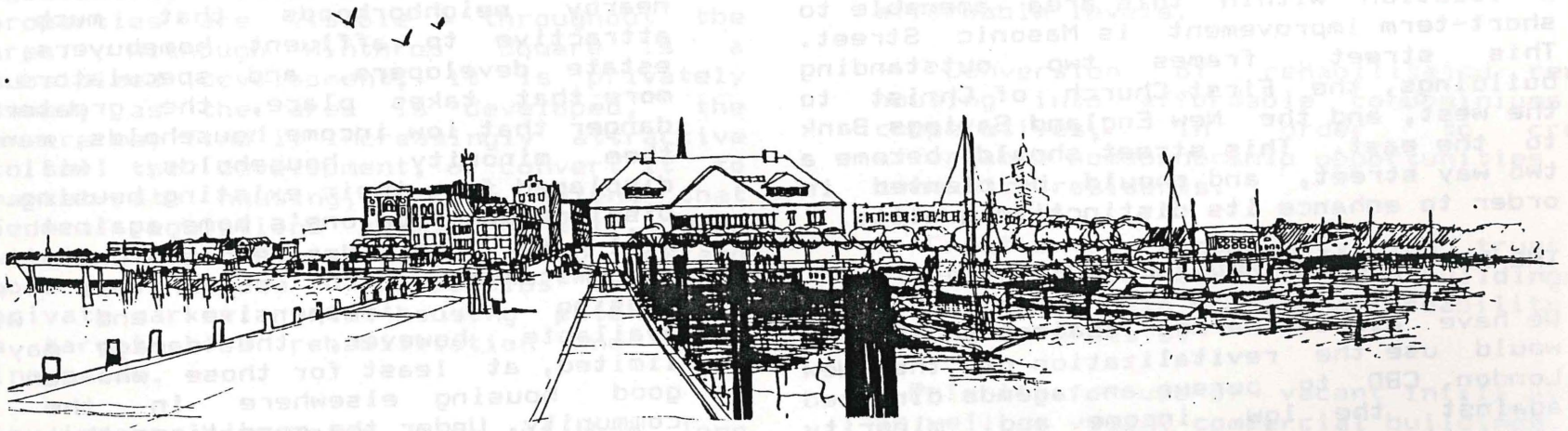
The site, partially owned by the city of New London, opposite the Shaw Mansion, and at present containing a combination of vacant land and derelict buildings, is particularly sensitive and must be given particularly careful treatment. In conjunction with the Shaw Mansion, it represents the gateway to downtown New London along Bank Street, an important automotive access point. In addition, it represents a link to future development along the waterfront facing the southern part of the CBD.



THE THAMES RIVER WATERFRONT

The visual relationship between the downtown and a working, marine-related, waterfront is one of the strongest assets of the New London CBD, which contributes significantly to its distinctive character. Overly intensive development on the waterfront will cut the downtown off from that relationship, creating a wall between the city and the river, and should be discouraged.

A medium-density low-rise housing development in conjunction with water-related uses such as a marina should be planned for that part of the waterfront owned by the city of New London parallel to the southern edge of the CBD. Public access to the water should be incorporated into any plans for this tract. No more development of the waterfront should be planned at this time; in the event that the Amtrak holdings become available, they should be retained for open space and limited water-dependent uses. City Pier should be restored and maintained as an open public space, and water-related activities encouraged to the north, including the ferries as well as both existing and proposed industrial uses.



The Image of the City

THE URBAN RENEWAL AREA

The intense difficulty inherent in seeking to improve the visual and pedestrian quality of the area north of State Street suggests that major improvements in this area be deferred until significant changes have taken place not only in the physical, but also in the economic climate of the New London CBD as a result of the other improvements and activities proposed. Eventual activities should focus on filling in blank spaces along the street lines, initially on Eugene O'Neill Drive and Union Street, and eventually along Winthrop Boulevard, in order to foster a pedestrian character and a visual intensity as close as possible to that characteristic of State Street and the southern parts of the CBD.

A location within this area amenable to short-term improvement is Masonic Street. This street frames two outstanding buildings, the First Church of Christ to the west, and the New England Savings Bank to the east. This street should become a two way street, and should be planted in order to enhance its distinctive quality.

THE NEW DOWNTOWN AND THE POOR

We have already warned against those who would use the revitalization of the New London CBD to pursue an agenda directed against the low income and minority population living close by to the downtown area. The issue of downtown rebuilding and the poor goes well beyond that relatively straightforward concern. The majority of the households living within the CBD, and in the residential areas adjacent to downtown, are lower income households. These families live principally in the Winthrop Square apartments (a privately-owned Federally-subsidized low and moderate income housing development), and in the area generally known as the Truman Street area southeast of the CBD. Even without deliberate intent, revitalization of downtown New London could inflict severe hardship on many of these families.

Significant improvements and increased economic activity in the New London CBD, will increase property values throughout the area. The success of residential development within the CBD will make nearby neighborhoods that much more attractive to affluent homebuyers, real estate developers, and speculators. The more that takes place, the greater the danger that low income households, many of them minority households, will be displaced from their existing housing. Displacement from one's home against one's will is not desireable under any circumstances. In communities where housing is inexpensive and widely available, however, the damage may be limited, at least for those who can find good housing elsewhere in the same community. Under the conditions that exist in New London, however, displacement could be not only unpleasant, but deeply traumatic.

The overwhelming majority of households in New London are renters, particularly the lower income members of the Black and Spanish community. Alternative housing is in short supply; the City's Housing Assistance Plan indicates that the rental vacancy rate is under 1%, a level which means that housing is nearly unavailable. Long waiting lists exist for all subsidized housing in the city. Even modest housing offered for sale in the city typically costs over $100,000, a figure well out of reach of even moderate income households. Low income households in New London simply do not have options.

The Truman Street area is already being affected by gentrification. Despite the area's unsavory reputation, signs of substantial investment on individual properties are visible throughout the area. Although Winthrop Square is a subsidized development, it is privately owned; as the area is developed, the owners may find it increasingly attractive to sell the development, or convert it to market-rate housing, to the extent that Federal regulations permit. Finally, even within the CBD, as many as 100 low and moderate income households live in private market rental housing potentially a target for rehabilitation and rent increases.

Low income households, many of them long term residents of the community, should not become the inadvertent victims of much needed improvement and revitalization. Unfortunately, experience has shown that, in the absence of a systematic effort to counter the economic effects of redevelopment, such victimization almost inevitably takes place.

The resources and ability to design and implement a program to maintain affordable housing within and around the CBD lie within the means of the city, working with the state and Federal governments, and with the city's private sector. Among the steps that should be given immediate consideration are:

- Implementation of programs to provide for rehabilitation, perhaps through nonprofit corporations, of existing housing occupied by lower income households, while maintaining rents at affordable levels.

- Conversion of rehabilitated rental housing into affordable condominiums and cooperatives, in order to create affordable homeownership opportunities for community residents.

- Creation of a community land trust or other entity to bank land and buildings in order to maintain housing affordability on a long term basis.

- Priority for use of vacant infill sites, as well as vacant commercial buildings, in the Truman Street area, for affordable housing projects developed in conjunction with community residents and leadership.

- A commitment by city government, within its resources and legal authority, to maintain the Winthrop Square development as affordable low and moderate income housing.

These are immediate and concrete steps that can be taken to maintain a desperately needed stock of affordable housing within the city of New London. These steps can be taken at the same time that these areas are being upgraded, and that housing opportunities for more affluent households are also being provided. **There is room in New London for everybody.**

Housing is not the only issue affecting the lower income residents of the neighborhoods directly adjacent to the CBD. Low income households are in need of better job and educational opportunities. The city, and the downtown organizations which we propose, should give high priority to programs that will enable local lower income residents, and minority residents - low income and otherwise - to benefit from the employment and entrepreneurial opportunities to be created in downtown. Finally, many members of New London's minority community feel strongly that they are not really considered full participants in the decision-making processes that affect their lives. The private and public sectors must make a commitment to a truly integrated and open decision making process, which does not leave a significant part of the city's population out in the cold.

Vehicular and Pedestrian Transportation

Bank Street from State Street, New London, Conn.

CHAPTER FOUR

VEHICULAR AND PEDESTRIAN TRANSPORTATION

Introduction

> "The major thoroughfares constitute the skeleton framework of every city plan. It is they that determine the broad general features of the plan; it is they that define, coordinate and compose the relationships of all the constituent elements of the plan." Herbert S. Swan, The New London Plan, 1926

Transportation improvements are an important component of the overall revitalization plan for New London's downtown and the subject of extensive public discussion. The community has a long history of transportation plans for downtown--many implemented, others undone, some shelved. Some current ones, like the proposed reopening of Captain's Walk to vehicular traffic, revisit familiar problems and possible solutions.

In short, the community does not lack ideas about what might be done to improve street circulation, parking and other elements of its transportation system. There is need, however, to consider individual improvements within the context of the system in order to avoid piecemeal approaches, have the system make sense as a functional whole, and provide for all the implementation ingredients--such as maintenance and enforcement--that are essential to sustain the success of the improvements over time.

This overall approach to transportation in downtown will necessarily include both short-term actions that can be implemented soon and longer term elements to be implemented when the time is ripe for associated joint development, land use and financing elements that will go along with the transportation improvement.

Key components of the improvement strategy include:

- an integrated traffic circulation plan for major and minor streets;
- parking, both public and private, and on-street and off-street;
- pedestrian access and circulation;
- public transportation;
- intermodal coordination; and
- truck access and loading.

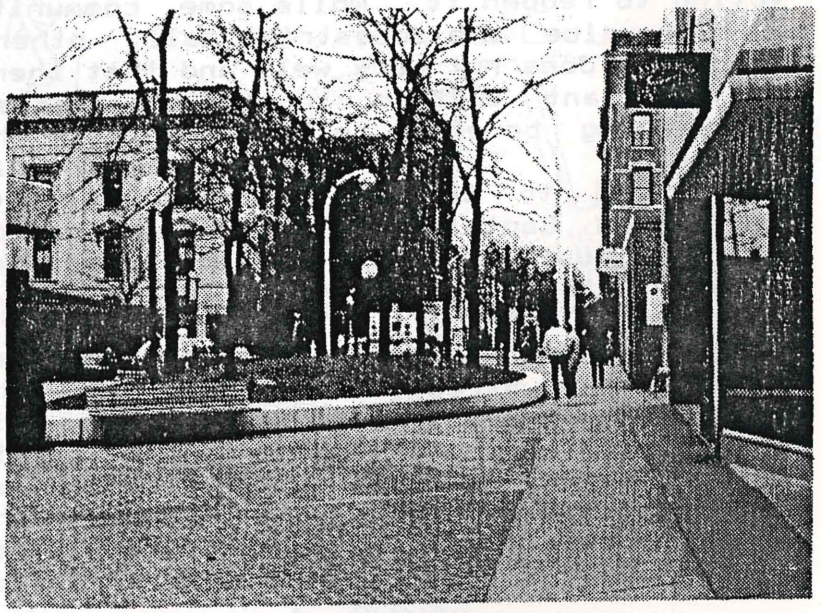
Existing Conditions

The overall transportation system of downtown New London is basically sound and it works, despite certain actual and perceived problems that require attention. The system reflects a series of positive, incremental changes over the last two centuries to adapt it to gradual development and change--such as growth in land area, changing land uses, and the rise in dominance of the automobile.

The system also reflects specific changes that have had a more sudden and dramatic effect on the area--the huge bridge and ramp interchange adjacent to downtown; the major clearance, land use and street changes of urban renewal; Captain's Walk--at first positive, but now thought by many to be a negative feature; and the injection of new system elements--the parking garages, adding and extending streets, and occasional street closings and parcel reconfigurations.

Still, the essential structure and integrity of the downtown system is intact, echoing its past and providing a sound basis for the future. There is meaning and value in this basic system. Key elements of the skeleton have been kept whole and functioning over many years, even in the face of changes in the "flesh" on the bones. The spines of Bank and State--now Captain's Walk--are virtually as they were when first laid out and they remain central avenues, both for movement and for carving out the sectors of downtown. The modified radial/grid system fits the topography of the downtown, provides the structure for land parcelization and links downtown at many points to surrounding areas.

Within this overall positive picture, there are a number of specific transportation issues and problems and recommended improvements which are addressed in the following sections.



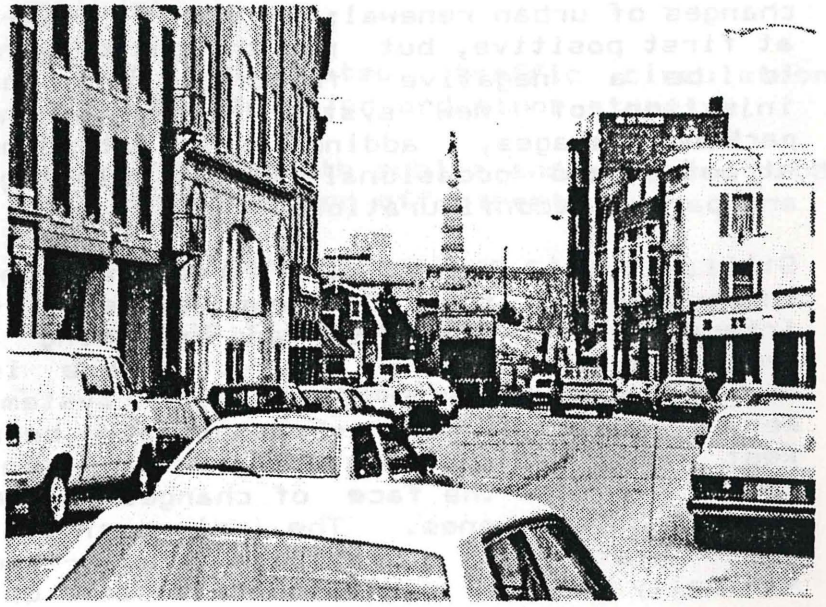
Traffic and Circulation Issues

The overall circulation pattern of the one-way pair of Bank Street and Eugene O'Neill Drive/Green Street works well to serve north-south traffic. However, east-west moves are more difficult to accomplish and the combination of one-way street patterns and the prohibition of traffic on Captain's Walk combine to create circuitous, confusing travel patterns. This is compounded by poor or missing signage to direct and orient users.

Reopening Captain's Walk to traffic has been the subject of extensive discussion and debate, with the City Council recently voting to reopen it. While some community members value the pedestrian mall, others think it does not work well and that there are important traffic circulation, access and parking benefits to be gained from the reopening. Considerable attention has been paid to the relationship between traffic on Captain's Walk and its effect on the business climate and perceived safety in the area.

Other traffic issues include congestion along Bank Street, due both to the relatively heavy traffic volumes in this corridor of the downtown and to traffic obstructions created by double parking and truck unloading along the street. The creation of the new Lower Bank Street behind and to the east of Bank Street would offer relief for traffic, parking and loading functions. The need to coordinate signal timing along Bank Street (and with other signals in the downtown area) has been cited both by locals and by the Connecticut Department of Transportation.

Particularly along Bank Street, but also along other streets in the downtown, paving, striping, signage improvement, street repairs and maintenance are much needed and would help both to improve conditions for traffic and to provide a more attractive environment for pedestrians and adjacent land uses.



Traffic and Circulation Improvements

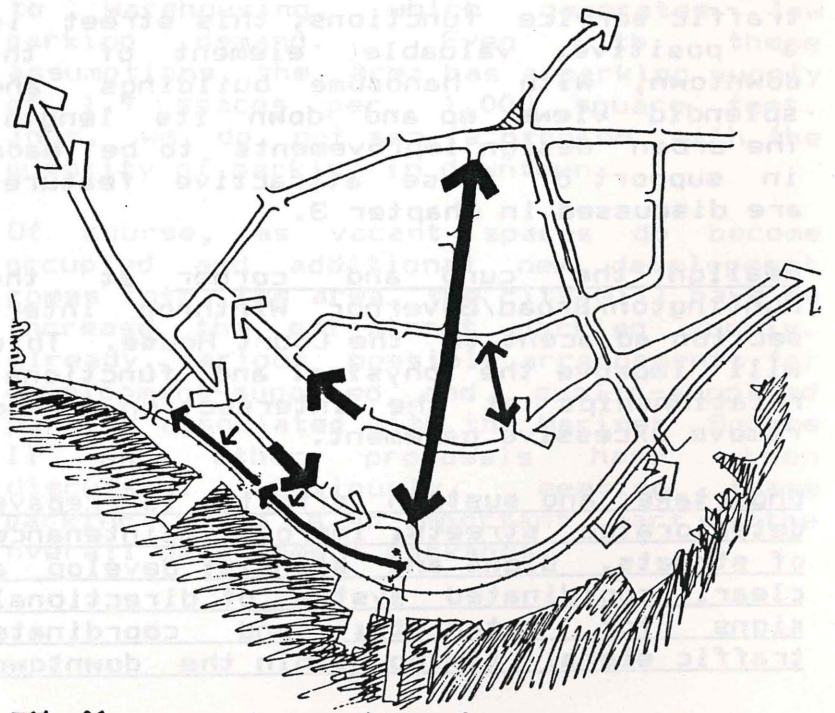
Reopen Captain's Walk to traffic. Clearly, the Captain's Walk pedestrian mall is not working as intended. While reopening the street to traffic will not be a critical ingredient in the economic revitalization along the street (this is much more a function of other forces that have brought about the decline and which will shape the economic future of the area) reopening the street is, on balance, a good idea. It allows positive opportunities to improve traffic circulation and reduce some of the circuitous, confusing movements that now occur.

Along with the reestablishment of the street as the main street of the downtown district, it should resume its former name of State Street. The street should accommodate two-way traffic along its length between Huntington and Bank Streets. East of Bank Street and onto Water Street in front of the train station, all traffic flows should remain northbound, as at present.

Keep Bank Street and Eugene O'Neill/Green as the key one-way pair for north-south through circulation.

Construct a new Lower Bank Street to the east of Bank Street. Provide parking on one side adjacent to the railroad fence, along with strong, attractive pedestrian access along the building frontages and truck loading areas at key locations on the parking side of the street. The important function of this street is to support and reinforce the development of new waterfront-oriented frontage along the length of Lower Bank Street.

Lower Bank Street should operate as a minor, local access street, not intended to carry large traffic volumes; recommended cobblestone paving and the street's necessarily narrow width due to the Amtrak right-of-way will reinforce this character. The traffic flow should be one-way southbound, with traffic entering at lower State Street adjacent to



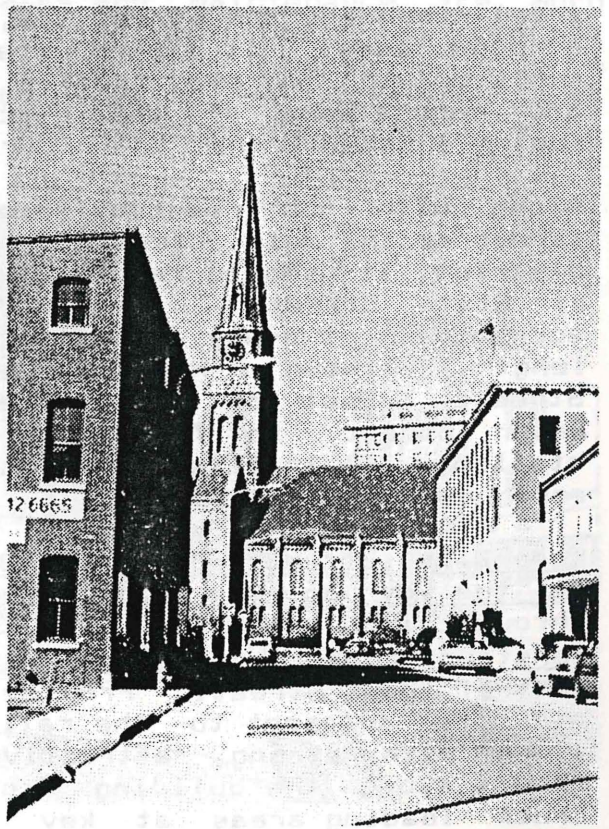
Traffic and Circulation Improvements

the train station and exiting at the new street just north of Tilley. (This street is to remain two-way to give access to the proposed new residential development on the waterfront to the south of the Coast Guard pier.) Two vehicular access points from Bank Street down to Lower Bank Street should be provided: one next to Roberts Stereo and another next to the Custom House.

Make Masonic Street two-way and provide for short-term, on-street parking to support the high level of brief stops at the post office, municipal building, and bank. Even more important than its traffic service functions, this street is a positive, valuable element of the downtown, with handsome buildings and splendid views up and down its length. The urban design improvements to be made in support of these attractive features are discussed in Chapter 3.

Realign the curb and corner at the Huntington/Broad/Governor Winthrop intersection adjacent to the Court House. This will improve the physical and functional relationships at the intersection and remove excessive pavement.

Undertake and sustain efforts to repave deteriorated streets; improve maintenance of streets, signs and signals; develop a clear, coordinated system of directional signs for motorists; and coordinate traffic signal timing within the downtown area. These measures will add to the operating efficiency of the system and enhance the attractiveness and image of downtown.



Parking Issues

The location and adequacy of downtown parking is perceived by community members as an important issue. This includes both off-street parking in lots and garages, as well as on-street spaces. Parking immediately in front of shops and offices is cited as an important factor in attracting patrons to the downtown. In addition to existing parking, the need for new parking to support various developments proposed in and around the downtown area is of concern. Adherence to and enforcement of parking regulations, particularly in public lots and on-street spaces, is also an issue.

While many people think that the parking supply in downtown is inadequate at present, we do not agree. There are some problems with the location of parking in relation to activity centers in downtown--exacerbated by many people's unwillingness to walk even short distances; some perceived safety problems and the unattractiveness of the pedestrian environment between parking facilities and destinations. Nonetheless, our analysis of the parking supply shows the following.

The downtown has a parking supply of 3,819 public and parking spaces, serving the 2,395,800 square feet of floor space (New London Downtown and Waterfront Development Program, 1985). This includes 387,400 square feet of parking structures, for an adjusted area of 2,008,400 square feet of floor space generating demand for parking. A standard of 1.5 to 2.0 parking spaces per 1,000 square feet of development is considered appropriate for an area like downtown New London. At these rates, 3013 to 4017 spaces are needed. In comparison with the supply of 3819 spaces, this reflects something from a surplus of about 800 spaces to a deficit of about 200.

This analysis assumes that all currently vacant space is occupied and generating demand for parking--accounting for 726 to 969 spaces. Further, no allowance is made for the 6% or more of floor space devoted to warehousing, which generates low parking demand. Even with these assumptions, the area has a parking supply of 1.9 spaces per 1,000 square feet. Thus, we do not see a problem with the quantity of parking in downtown.

Of course, as vacant spaces do become occupied and additional new development comes into the area, the city will have to increase the off-street parking supply. Already, various possible arrangements for development-supplied and public-supplied parking associated with the Mariner Square II and other proposals have been discussed. Obviously, meeting these parking needs is an important part of the overall development packages.

While we do not presently see a parking supply problem, we do find a problem with the distribution of parking in relation to major destinations and activity centers. The north part of downtown--from the upper portion of State Street and the Garde Theater and extending around the Huntington Street area to the north, would benefit from a supply of several hundred parking spaces.

While many people express the desire for additional on-street parking immediately around drivers' destinations, the additional curb frontage is not readily created. There are not significant portions of frontage that are not now in parking use which could be converted to it. Angle parking is not a good idea in an area like this because it is disruptive to traffic flows.

More efficient utilization of on-street space has potential to yield modest increases in the supply of parking for patrons. New London's size requirements for on-street spaces are larger than usual and adopting commonly used standards could yield additional spaces, particularly along longer block faces. More effective enforcement of on-street spaces to get longer term users out of these spaces and into parking lots and garages would also make the use of on street spaces more efficient.

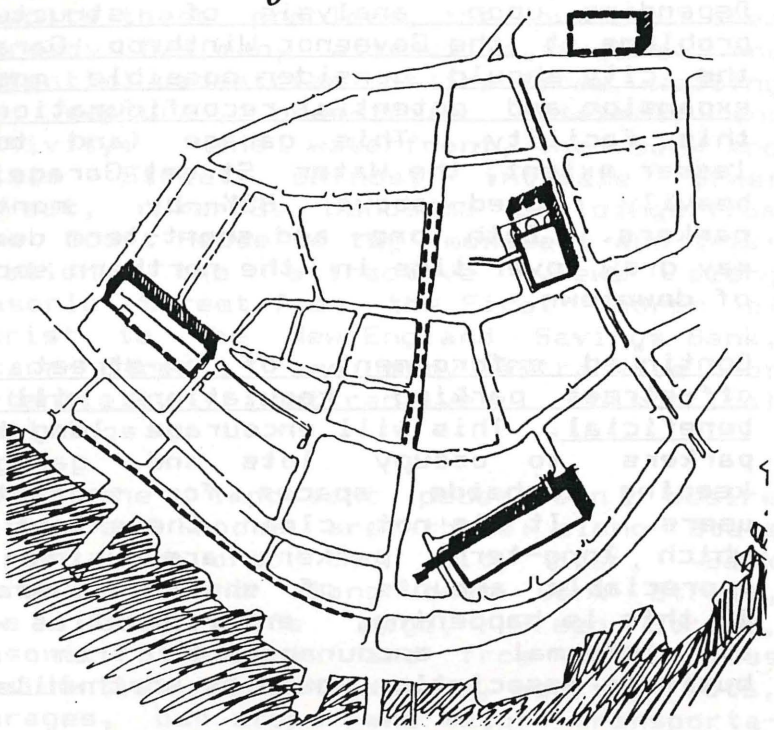
Two additional problems have to do with the condition of parking facilities. The city is presently looking into the nature and extent of structural problems at the Governor Winthrop garage. The surface parking lots along Eugene O'Neill/Green are in poor condition and would benefit from repaving and striping, as well as edge treatments to improve the attractiveness of these areas.

Parking Improvements

Reallocate parking supply within downtown and, as needed to support new development, increase parking supply. Obviously, this is a strategy for the longer term. Individual components should not be implemented without reference to the overall parking system and supply in the downtown. One area warranting additional public parking at some point in the future is in the northwest corner of the area at the Huntington-Broad Street intersection (California Fruit site).

Additional structured parking will probably be warranted in the long term at one of the two public lots along O'Neill/Green. As noted in Chapter 3, we recommend that the more southerly lot be developed as a joint use parcel, composed of housing and structured parking. While the more northerly of the lots could also be developed for joint use, it is possible that some or all of the surface parking now in the lot would not be required, thus

Public Parking Improvements



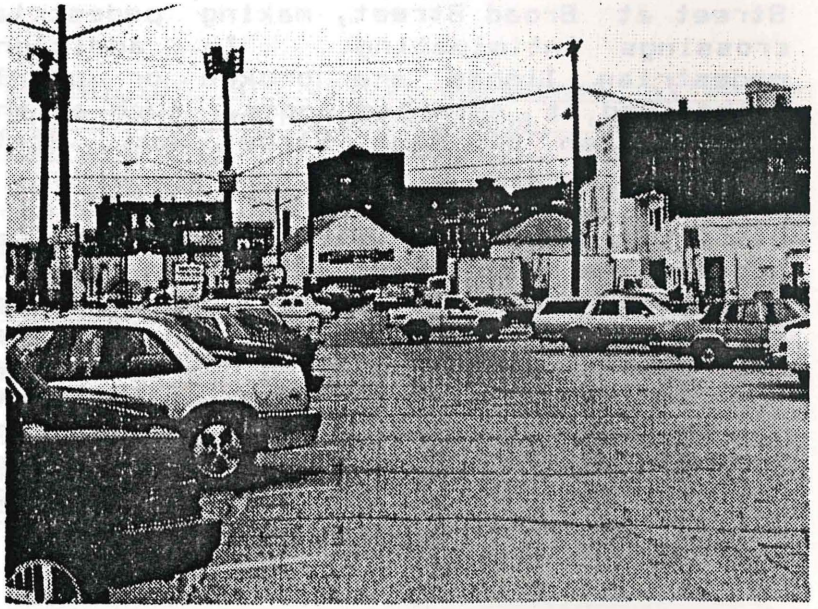
potentially making some or all of the parcel available for development.

These opportunities must be evaluated at such future date when both development potentials and long-term parking demand levels are better known than now.

The proposed SNET garage at the corner of Methodist and Union Streets is a good idea. When it is constructed, the present SNET lot on Washington Street would be available and desirable for infill development, as discussed further in Chapter 3.

In the short-term, the two public parking lots should be repaved, striped, lit and edge treatments added along O'Neill/Green to improve their sorry appearance and encourage patrons to use them.

Also in the short-term, parking should be reestablished along both sides of reopened State Street. As noted in Chapter 3, elimination of the irregular curb line will allow for modest increases in the number of curbside spaces along the street.



Perhaps most important, the lack of general activity and diverse, attractive locations that people want to walk to reduces the level of pedestrian activity and the willingness of people to walk greater distances to reach desired locations.

Vehicular/pedestrian conflicts occur at several key locations, particularly the crossing between the Parade and the train station, and along Bank Street, where pedestrians jaywalk and many vehicles fail to stop fully at the Golden Street intersection. Crosswalk markings are fading (or absent) at assorted locations, such as the Bank Street crossing at Golden Street, and other intersections with large expanses of pavement, such as Huntington Street at Broad Street, making pedestrian crossings intimidating. In addition, pedestrian lights are broken or poorly maintained at assorted spots, such as the intersection of Bank Street and State Street.

Perceived personal safety problems for pedestrians have been cited in various locations--particularly Captain's Walk and Bank Street. Conversations with the Chief of Police indicate that the downtown area is, in fact, safer than many other parts of New London. Nonetheless, the perception of unsafe or "creepy" places as one citizen puts it, effectively act to reduce pedestrian activity, particularly in the evening.

Depending upon analysis of structural problems at the Governor Winthrop Garage, the city should consider possible modest expansion and potential reconfiguration of this facility. This garage (and to a lesser extent, the Water Street Garage) is heavily used--about 85%--by monthly parkers. Both long- and short-term demand may grow over time in the northern sector of downtown.

Continued enforcement of on-street and off-street parking regulations will be beneficial. This will encourage long-term parkers to occupy lots and garages, keeping curbside spaces for short-term users. It is not clear the extent to which long-term parkers are using up appreciable amounts of short-term space. If this is happening, enforcement as well as informal encouragement from the business association would be worthwhile.

Pedestrian Access and Circulation Issues

The size of New London's downtown and the scale of its development, particularly to the south of State Street, are naturally suited to pedestrians. However, many factors now mitigate against the effective operation of downtown as a vibrant pedestrian area. These include deteriorated and vacant buildings and parcels, poor sidewalk conditions, unattractive streetscapes and proliferation of poles, trash barrels and other obstructions along sidewalks.

Despite these problems, the downtown area already has many attractive features and potential pedestrian desire lines waiting to capture pedestrian interest and activity: the waterfront, the Bank and State Street spines, intimate Green Street, numerous handsome buildings from the Court House to the monument and train station, the attractive views along Masonic Street from the First Church of Christ to the New England Savings Bank, Starr Street, and many attractive or potentially attractive historical buildings.

Among the important pedestrian desire lines and nodes are these: along State Street and onto the city pier, Bank Street, to and along Lower Bank Street, the waterfront's edge, Green Street, Masonic Street, to and from the various residential concentrations, parking lots, garages, bus stops and major transportation terminals, such as the train station and ferry terminals.

Of course, the key to successful pedestrian activity lies overwhelmingly in the activity centers, events, numbers of people and street amenities that will make the major and minor pedestrian routes function successfully. Setting out the potential activity lines and nodes is only the first--and least important step. While these important urban design and development actions are addressed in other chapters, certain transportation system improvements are noted below.

Pedestrian Improvements

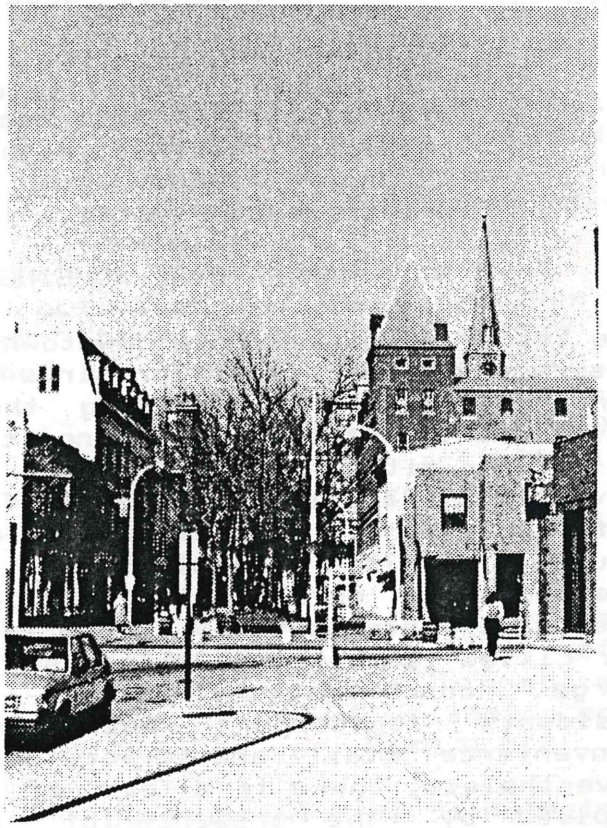
Give priority to pedestrian-related improvements to and along the major spines of State Street, Bank Street, Lower Bank Street and the waterfront. Improvements to pedestrian paths from parking areas and other key activity centers to these spines should also have priority. Needed actions include repair and replacement of pavement, removal of obstructions and development of landscaping and other streetscape amenities. Defunct parking meter posts should be removed, as should redundant signs; remaining signs should be kept in good repair. Lighting and plantings, as discussed further in Chapter 3 are also an integral element of the overall improvement plan.

Budget for and devote sustained attention to the maintenance and upkeep of improvements. Without these vital investments of money and effort, both the capital investment and the positive pedestrian environment will be lost.

On minor streets within the overall downtown pedestrian district, particularly on streets with low traffic volumes, identify opportunities to adjust street space allocations between vehicles and pedestrians via wider sidewalks and removal of obstructions.

Again, as in many cities across the country, the traditional C.B.D. highest and best use, office space, may have been supplanted in New London by residential space, at least in older buildings.

This, a development scenario which includes the production of a hundred loft units of housing on State and Bank Streets becomes a realistic response to both civic and market forces. A high priority, therefore, of the downtown development organization is the determination of the need for a public program to assist the private sector in producing the loft housing described here. By way of example, the attached table 15 is included to illustrate the magnitude of the shortfall between the cost of producing one unit of loft housing and its economic value. In the absence of any public assistance or benefits, and using several broker's estimates of unrenovated building values on Bank and State Streets, the cost of this unit is $95,061 while its value, determined by prevailing rents, operating costs and conventional financing terms, is only $33,272. The shortfall of $61,819 may be covered by a combination of four methods, two of which are effectively city-provided subsidies: real estate tax abatements (phased out over 10 years) and below-market interest rate financing. The third method is the currently available historic structures rehabilitation tax credit (20% of certified rehabilitation expenditures). The fourth method is a reduction of $10/s.f. in value



attributable to the structure, which we believe is a fairer reflection of current market values given the recent softening of the Northeast regional real estate market, generally, and the high commercial vacancy rate in downtown New London, specifically.

The table illustrates that use of these methods, in a manner entirely consistent with the city of New London's policies governing its tax and interest-rate relief programs, can result in the equalization of cost and value of loft housing conversion. Further analysis of this issue is a most appropriate topic for the proposed downtown development organization to pursue with the city administration.

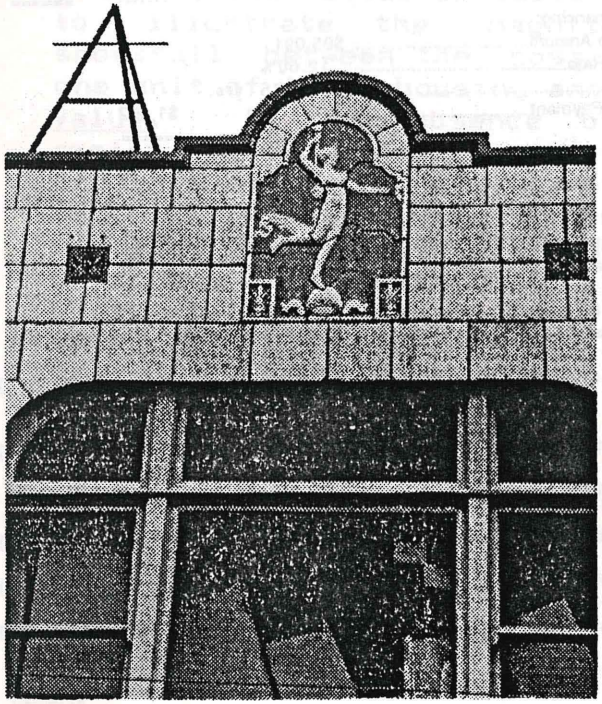
LOFT HOUSING ANALYSIS - PER UNIT ESTIMATES-

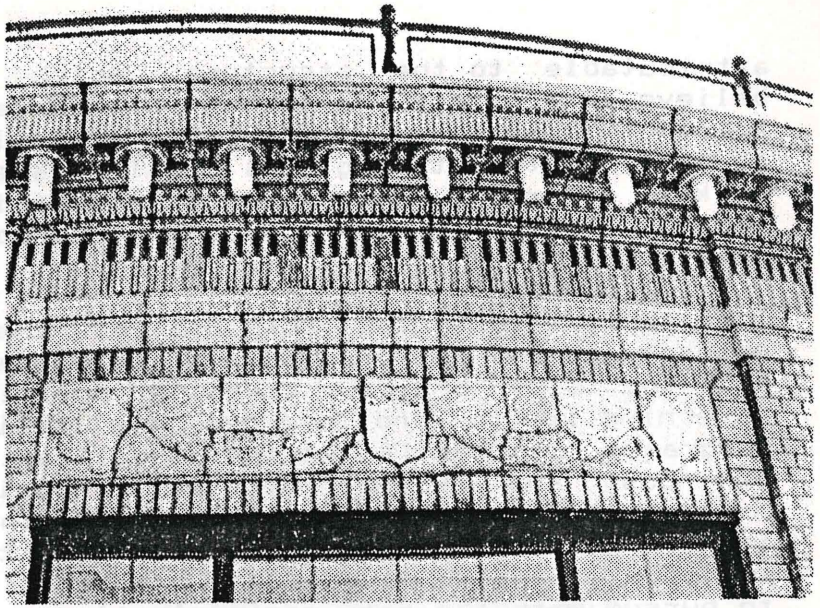
ASSUMPTIONS:

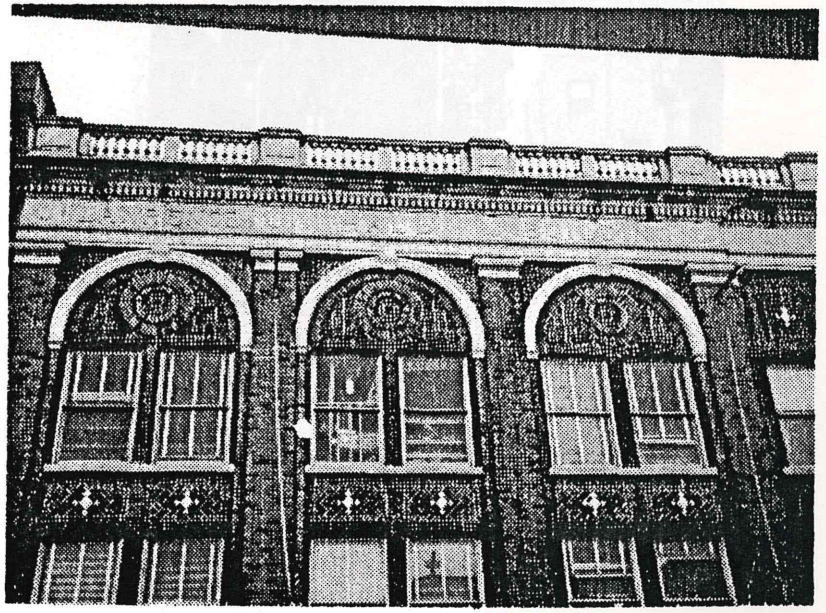
A. Unit Characteristics					
Gross Square Footage				1,150	s.f.
Net Square Footage				863	s.f.
Monthly Rent (N/I Utilities)				$650	
Annual Real Estate Taxes				$1,700	
Other Operating Expenses (annual)				$1,500	
B. Development Costs					
Purchase Price	$25	/s.f	$28,750		
Renovation Budget	$35	/s.f	$40,250		
Soft Costs	$15	/s.f	$17,250		
Construction Period	6	mos.			
Purchase & Construction Financing :					
Fees	3.50	%	$3,019		
Interest	13.50	%	$5,822		$95,091
C. Permanent Financing:					
Mortgage Amount	$95,091				
Interest Rate	12.00%				
Term	25	yrs.			
Monthly Payment				$1,002	

PRO-FORMA:

Gross Rent				$7,800
Less:				
Real Estate Taxes			$1,700	
Other Operating Expenses			$1,500	$3,200
Net Income Free & Clear				$4,600
Less: Debt Service				$12,018
Net Cash Flow				($7,418)
Capitalized Value of Shortfall, at Cap. Rate of	0.12			($61,819)
Methods to Cover Shortfall:				
Historic Renovation Tax Credit at 20%			$8,050	($53,769)
Reduce Building Value to	$15	/s.f.	$11,500	($42,269)
First Year Tax Abatement	$1,700		$14,167	($28,102)
Reduce Annual Interest Rate to	9.00%		$30,001	$1,899







Conclusions

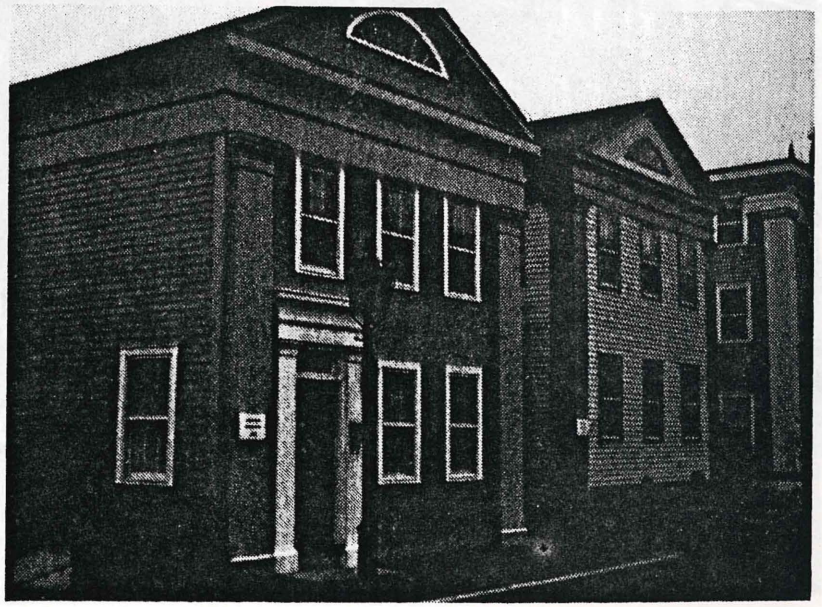
CONCLUSION

In the preceding pages we have first outlined a variety of problems and issues facing downtown New London, and then a wide variety of strategies and projects through which the community can address the problems with which they are confronted. We believe that the plan embodied in these strategies and projects is a realistic one, which can be carried out and, if carried out, can achieve significant benefits for the city of New London and its central business district.

Our confidence in the plan is grounded in one fundamental element by which it differs from many earlier efforts, most notably the grandiose urban renewal efforts of the 1960's. Our proposals do not seek to remake downtown New London in a new image of our creation; on the contrary, they are motivated by a fundamental respect for those who built the city its residents know and love, and for the work of their hands and minds.

The people who built New London in the 18th and 19th centuries built well. They created a street network capable of handling 20th century traffic. They built buildings of human scale and modest beauty, buildings with the flexibility to be used for modern as well as older uses, to be converted from use to use without losing their integrity and character. They left their descendants with a city which, even after the depredations of recent years, still possesses a distinctive character and style, a sense of place.

It is incumbent on their descendants, who are today's New London business and civic leaders, to show the same respect, and to use that as the touchstone by which development plans and proposals must be evaluated - do they respect the fabric and integrity of the community as it was created during the 18th and 19th centuries, or do they violate it? If the answer does not come through clearly and unequivocally, the proposal should not be allowed to take place.



Respect for the fabric of the city is but one of the many conditions that must be met if the goals of the plan are to be achieved. For that to happen, some of the basic attitudes toward planning and development must be changed; to that end, we suggest three overarching principles to guide implementation of the efforts proposed in this report.

THERE ARE NO QUICK FIXES

The R/UDAT team has recommended that the pedestrian mall known as Captain's Walk be reopened to vehicular traffic. The team made that recommendation with some trepidation. That was not because the team felt that it was a bad idea, but rather because it was clear that far too many people in the community - who should know better - continue to believe that reopening State Street, in and of itself, will significantly transform the economic and social character of downtown New London.

We do not believe that it will. It may help, modestly, or it may make no difference. In either case, it is only one of the more modest of a series of actions that must be taken over an extended period if downtown New London is to develop a reinvigorated economic base, and a newly vital role as the center of the community. No meaningful results will come from anything other than systematic implementation of a series of carefully planned and executed steps, over an extended period.

NOTHING HAPPENS RIGHT AWAY

No matter how well-executed the plans may be, they will not show instant results. The process of downtown New London's decline has been going on for decades; it will not be reversed in a matter of months, or even a few years. If there is to be any realistic hope of significant change, the business, civic, and political leadership of the city must commit itself to a plan of action that will require many years to carry out, and which may not bear tangible fruit until many years after the first steps have been taken.

To stick to a plan over an extended period requires a level of determination and a consistency which is difficult to sustain over an extended period. While changes in economic and social reality will call for changes in the plan over time, a consistent dedication to the principles and goals underlying the plan must be sustained. Institutions capable of maintaining that dedication must be created and supported, and a community consensus built around the rebuilding of downtown New London.

NOBODY CAN DO IT ALONE

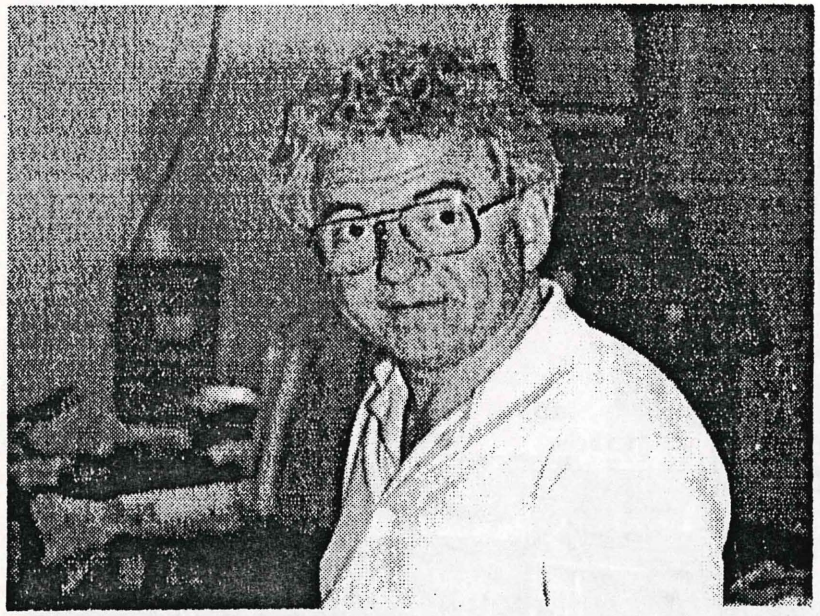
Going it alone is an old New England tradition, a tradition that has been characteristic of much public and private sector behavior in New London as well as elsewhere. Far too many people either want to do it all, or want to be let alone to do their thing, and let other people worry about the city. Few efforts have been made to create a real consensus around a plan of action, or even a body of goals; few efforts have been made to create institutions through which diverse individuals and interests can share in the process of framing goals and making decisions.

New London is full of diverse interests, diverse beyond the simple dichotomy of public and private sectors. Within the business community, merchants, developers, property owners and professionals all have diverse interests. There are significant interests that must be a part of any consensus that are not business interests as conventionally defined - the historic preservation community, the religious community, and the black and Hispanic communities. The last group, as we have shown, will be directly - and potentially harmfully - affected by plans for downtown New London.

No one interest, or group of interests, can achieve the revitalization of the downtown by itself. No one group has the power, or the resources, or the wisdom, singlehandedly to take on an effort of the magnitude involved here. Only through a commitment on the part of all groups to cooperate with one another, and to commit their time, money, and energy to a cooperative effort, can the effort succeed.

The R/UDAT team believes that the people of New London will rise to the challenge which we are presenting them. The city has overcome many difficulties during its history of nearly 350 years. We believe that the problems of the present, complex and intractable as they may seem, will also be overcome, by the dedication and talents of the community, working together.

R/UDAT Team Acknowledgements



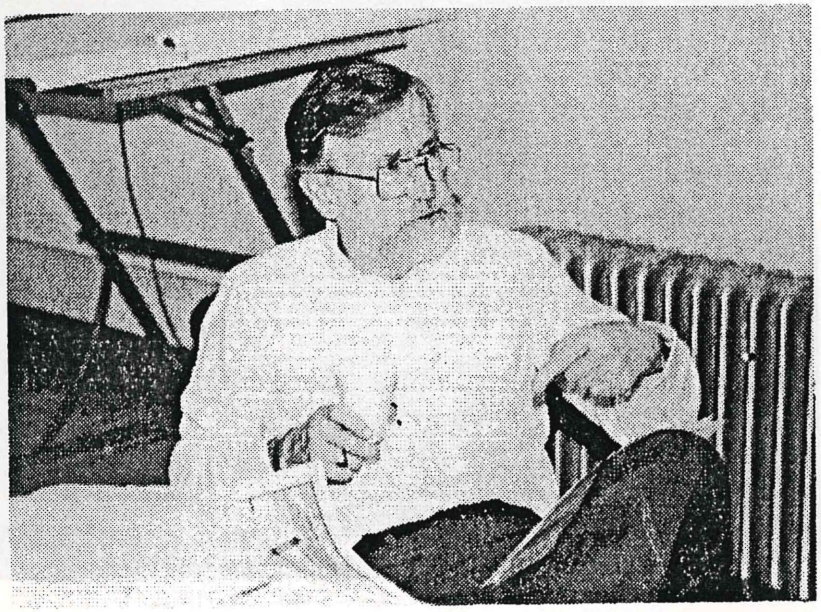
Fred Travisano, chairman of the New London R/UDAT, is a partner of Mostoller and Travisano Architects in Princeton, New Jersey. He has extensive experience in both architecture and urban design. He led the Department of Planning and Development for the city of Trenton for seven years.

He was the 1981 NEA Mid-Career Fellow in Architecture at the American Academy in Rome, has won numerous design competition awards, and is a repeat R/UDAT alumnus.

Fred has taught at Cooper Union where he received a Bachelors Degree in Architecture.

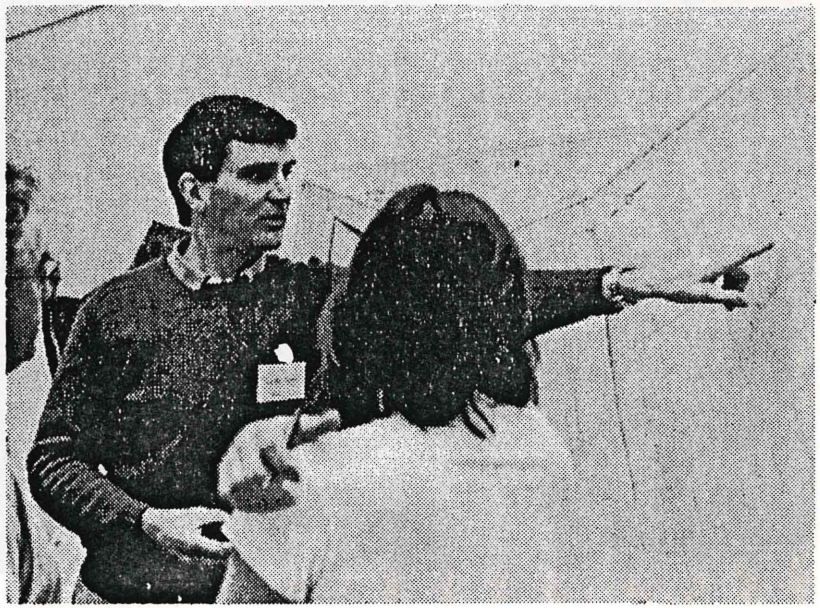
Robert Busser has been actively involved in community architecture in Columbus, Ohio. He is Executive Director of community design centers, assisting neighborhood commercial districts and small towns in economic development programs. He was previously a builder and developer of low-cost housing.

Robert served on a R/UDAT and subsequent Remaking Cities Conference in Pittsburg, PA. He has a Bachelors degree from the University of Pennsylvania and a Masters of Architecture from Yale University.



Lawrence O. Houstoun, Jr. is a principal of The Atlantic Group, an urban development consulting firm located in Cranbury, New Jersey. He served as Assistant to the Secretary of the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development and directed its Comprehensive Planning Assistance Program.

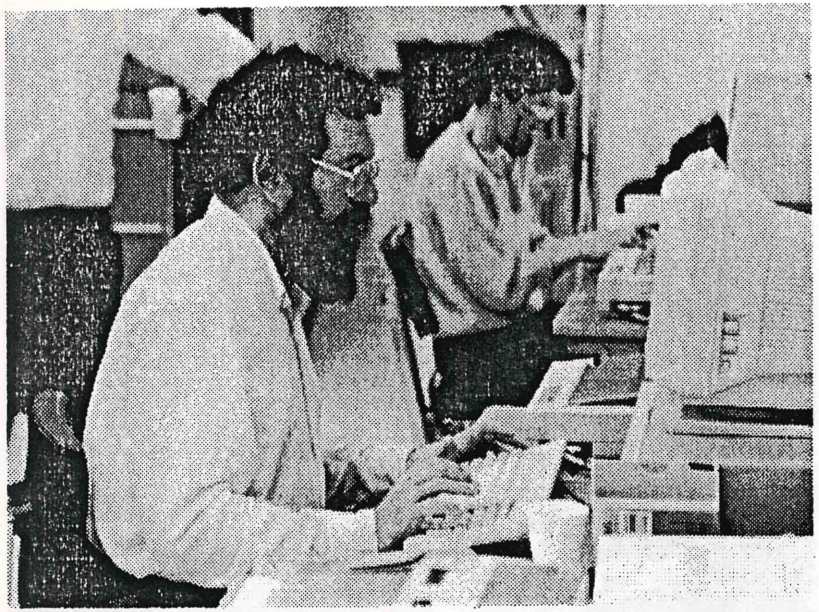
He is currently President of Downtown New Jersey, a statewide non-profit corporation serving to improve cities and towns through preservation, redevelopment and management of commercial services. Larry has taught at George Washington University and received government and law and city and regional planning degrees from Lafayette College and Catholic University.



Randy Jones practices architecture and urban design as President of City Design Collaborative, Inc. in Boston. He is currently involved with several urban revitalization programs throughout Massachusetts.

He co-authored a publication for the Northeast Regional Illinois Planning Commission, as well as having served on a R/UDAT in Oldham County, Kentucky.

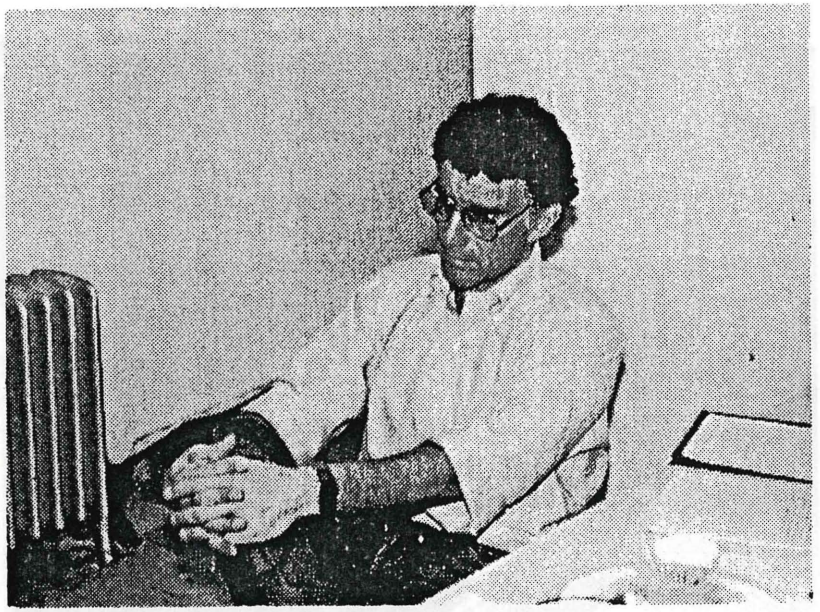
Randy earned a Bachelor of Architecture degree at the University of Washington, before continuing his education in the Master of Architecture and City Planning Program at the University of Pennsylvania.



Alan Mallach runs an independent consulting service in Roosevelt, New Jersey, specializing in housing, planning, economic analysis and land development. He was the Executive Director of the Atlantic County Improvement Authority.

He has taught widely and is at present a member of the adjunct faculty of the Rutgers University School of Law in Newark. He has published numerous articles as well as a book; Inclusionary Housing Programs: Policies and Practices.

Alan received a Bachelor of Arts degree from Yale College.



William Saslow acts as consultant and manager in Denver, Colorado for real estate projects ranging in size from apartments to large scale land development.

He has published several articles on community development and is a R/UDAT alumnus. He has taught at the University of Colorado Graduate School of Environmental Design.

Bill has Bachelor degrees in Architecture and Psychology from the University of Pennsylvania and Masters degrees in Business Administration and Urban Design from Harvard University.

Kathleen Stein-Hudson, a principal of Howard/Stein-Hudson Associates in Boston, specializes in transportation planning and management.

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The completion of the New London Downtown & Waterfront Revitalization R/UDAT Project was in no small part made possible by the dedication, perseverance, cooperation, and enthusiasm of the following New London residents and business and community leaders. The Office of Development and Planning regrets that other project participants whose contributions were also instrumental in the success of the project could not be acknowledged here.

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